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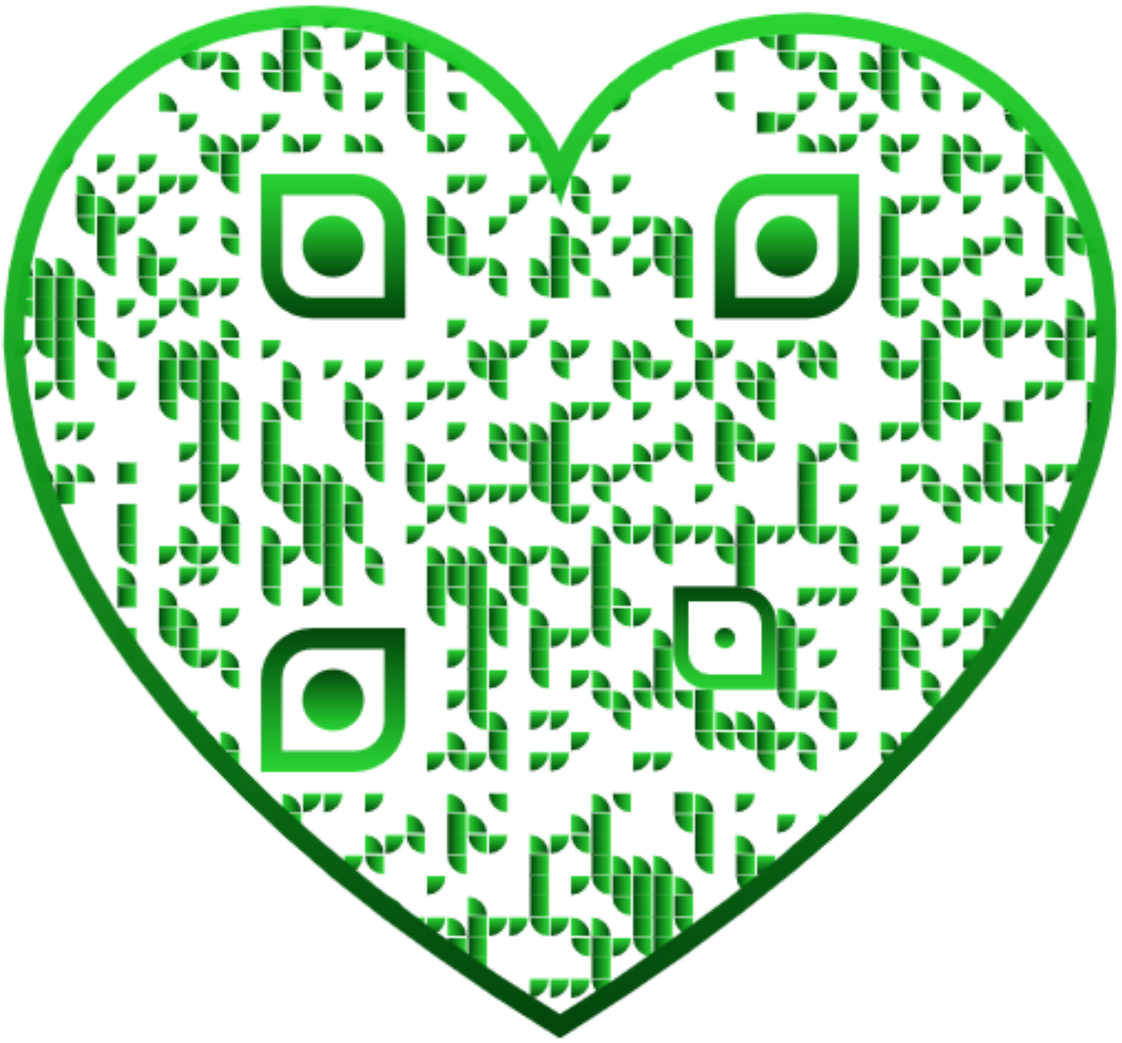

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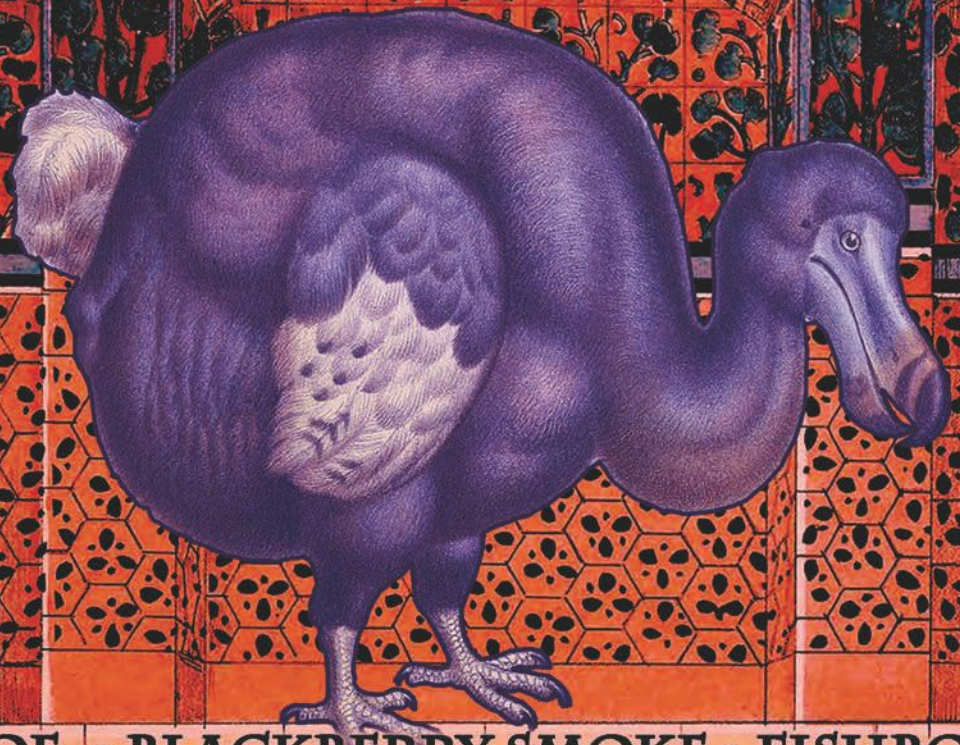

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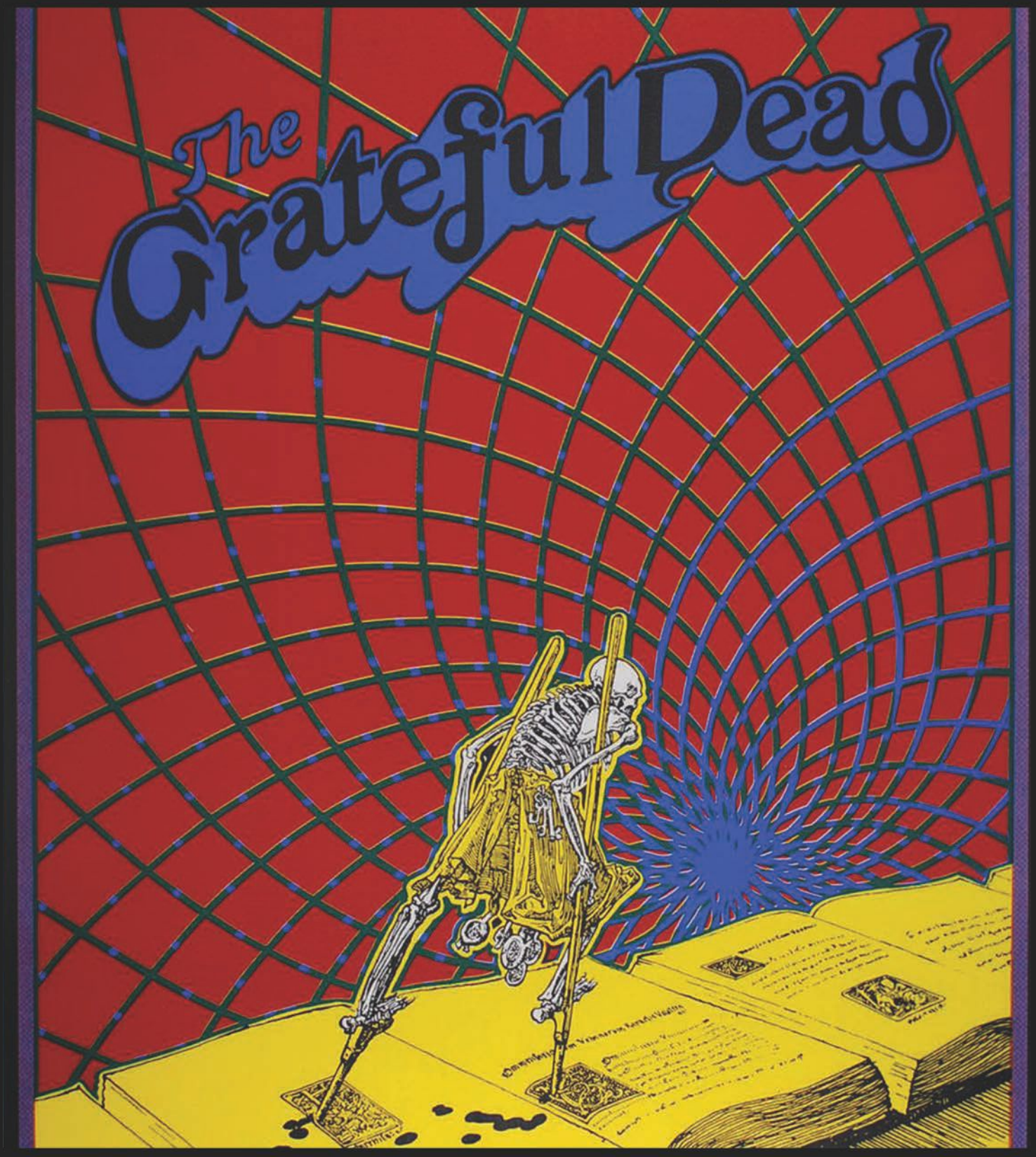

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V44 NO4

I FIRST HEARD OF FLEET FOXES IN the most 2008 way possible: a Gchat message that led me to a MySpace stream. "Have you heard of these guys? There's got to be a Jim James connection," my friend pinged me that fateful afternoon. And, after clicking the link, I quickly realized that meant: "Fleet Foxes sound like My Morning Jacket before they jumped down the sonic rabbit hole with *Z* and started moving between styles as if they were entering new levels of a video game."

That simple, digital endorsement was enough for me to check them out at a Sub Pop SXSW showcase a few weeks later and, within seconds, I was hooked. Fleet Foxes not only recalled the earnest, indie-folk yearning of My Morning Jacket but also the sweet, layered harmonies of CSN and the wistful indie-pop of labelmates The Shins. They felt like hippies in an increasingly hipster world or maybe just familiar enough to feel both retro and cool.

As luck and a prime booking would have it, Fleet Foxes rolled through New York less than a month later as the opening act for fellow roots-rock torchbearers Blitzen Trapper at Bowery Ballroom, and I was fortunate enough to interview them before their debut NYC show. The first thing that struck me about that, in retrospect, dream lineup was the power of social media—in the time since I had sent in my humble press request, Fleet Foxes went from an unknown "recommended if you like" suggestion to the night's unofficial co-headliner.

And the second thing that hit me, as the band huddled around a small table in Bowery Ballroom's downstairs bar, was how they moved like a unit—a mystic force at once

5 ARTISTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Palenville, NY

TOMORROW'S RAMBLERS

Ian, James and Simone Felice began playing music together on their front porch, against the gorgeous backdrop of the Catskill Mountains. After quickly discovering a unique, rootsy sound, the boys formed a group with friends Christmas and Farley. The band's simple, yet emotionally effective songs recall the early recordings of Dylan and Springsteen. "We like a lot of gospel, R&B, blues," guitarist and lyricist Ian explains. "And stuff from the '20s and '30s." Through gigs with everyone from Drive-By Truckers to Bright Eyes, and even an appearance at Levon Helm's Midnight Ramble, the group has won over new fans thanks to its intense, yet strangely intimate live show. The Felice Brothers recently issued their self-titled debut, self-recorded in, of all places, a chicken coop. "We like making albums ourselves," says Ian. "We like being in charge of every aspect of the recording."
www.thefelicebrothers.com ★ *Scott Bernstein*

FLEET FOXES

Seattle, WA

lost in a sea of long hair and group harmonies, yet centered around band leader and primary vocalist Robin Pecknold. Even at the tender age of 21, he had a fairytale backstory—writing songs by his family's waterfront property—yet he let his bandmates speak for him in an almost protective way. "The internet chews you up and spits you out," he told me that evening. "I'm interested in making a lot of records, not just two or three. I'm interested in making it last."

Josh Tillman, who played drums for Fleet Foxes, was the most outwardly proactive about his own music. Shortly after, he stopped by the *Relix* office for a solo set, and he pulled double duty opening for Fleet Foxes in the ensuing years. Yet the most striking thing isn't that Tillman was able to morph from a faceless bearded drummer into Father John Misty in less time than it's taken Fleet Foxes to cycle from album two to three; it's that Pecknold has managed to step out from his own shadow and embrace Fleet Foxes as a quasi-nom de plume, brought to life by his longtime friends and lifelong bandmates.

As Pecknold explains in this month's cover story, it took many years for him to accept his role as an iconic indie artist and, even after Grammy nominations and critical acclaim, he still struggles with his decision to dedicate his life to music. But by stepping away from Fleet Foxes and pursuing an undergraduate degree at Columbia, Pecknold managed to define his creative essence through his absence—an often-reflective, always-thoughtful mouthpiece for one of the defining folk-rock acts of a decidedly computer-programmed musical era.

Fleet Foxes' Bowery Ballroom interview ended up in our On the Verge section in the spring of 2008. Like Phish, Mumford & Sons and a few other select acts before them, we are proud to have tracked Fleet Foxes' story as they've grown from our front-of-book showcase all the way to the *Relix* cover. And, we are excited to continue tracking that once shy, still thoughtful singer-songwriter as he figures out new ways to emerge from his sonic shell with Fleet Foxes' third LP, *Crack-Up*. Who knows, perhaps one day we'll even run a profile on a newly decorated Professor Pecknold.

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ON THE COVER

Shawn Brackbill shot Fleet Foxes.

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FEATURES

71 | On Another Ocean

It's been more than six years since **Fleet Foxes** released a studio album, and it's an understatement to say that the Seattle outfit has been a bit quiet since their last show in 2012. Drummer **Josh Tillman** quit Fleet Foxes only to re-emerge with his equally successful Father John Misty persona, visionary **Robin Pecknold** left the music industry and enrolled at Columbia University, and the rest of the band busied themselves with side projects that strayed pretty far from Fleet Foxes' trademark CSN harmonies. Now, after regrouping last year, the ensemble is ready to reclaim the indie-folk scene that they helped popularize with their unexpected, experimental comeback, *Crack-Up*. Editor-in-Chief **Mike Greenhaus** lets us know what's next.

55 | The 17th Annual *Relix* Festival Guide: Set III

In 1967, Monterey Pop officially kicked off the rock-festival era and, 50 years later, that Summer of Love spirit is stronger than ever. From Summer Camp to Camp Bisco, Telluride Bluegrass to Telluride Blues & Brews and Electric Forest to Electric Zoo, we're proud to present the most comprehensive festival listings available for the 17th year in a row. We also profile two of the hottest artists creating those summer sounds, **The Head and The Heart** and **Shook Twins**.

52 | This Post-"Lisztomania" Life

Phoenix rose from indie darlings to one of the most critically acclaimed and popular groups of the 21st century, thanks to their breakout album *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix* and its singles "1901" and "Lisztomania." But the album's follow-up, *Bankrupt!*, was a more complex, mood-driven affair. In their first interview for their first LP in four years, the members of the group explain to **Emily Zemler** why they decided to step away from the madness to create an album for themselves and, hopefully, everybody else.

48 | United We Stand

Dispatch was one of the biggest independent bands of the early 2000s when they unexpectedly went on hiatus in 2002 and officially called it quits two years later. Their legacy only grew while they were away and, after a few one-off reunion shows, they formally reunited in 2011. Now, principals **Chad Urmston** and **Brad Corrigan** are fully committed to making Dispatch their top priority with a new album and summer tour, even as co-founder **Pete Heimbold** is forced to temporarily step away from the band. **Jeremy D. Goodwin** spent time with Urmston and Corrigan as they figured out how to move forward without their longtime friend and bandmate.

44 | Journey to the Center of the Gizzverse

King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard may be a bit behind their promise to deliver five full-length LPs this year, but they're still figuring out new ways to turn the modern psych-rock world on its head. Contributing Editor **Jesse Jarnow** checked in with the Australian ensemble during a recent New York stop and digs into the singular world they've carved out in their own prankster corner of the blogosphere.

40 | Searching for Mayhem

They've been a New Orleans institution for over 50 years and a national treasure for almost as long, but in the years since Hurricane Katrina, **Preservation Hall Jazz Band** have blossomed into worldwide ambassadors of a classic American sound. Pres Hall's latest journey took them to Cuba, where, as Contributing Editor **Tim Donnelly** finds, the veteran ensemble soaked up the rich sounds that inspired *So It Is*. And, with the help of TV on the Radio's **Dave Sitek**, they've created a new Crescent City classic.

37 | I Got a Song: A History of the Newport Folk Festival

The **Newport Folk Festival** has fallen on hard times more than once over the course of its almost 60-year history and always seems to bounce back stronger than ever, but even the festival's most loyal patrons were surprised a few years back when **George Wein**'s decidedly retro weekend turned into one of the summer's hottest tickets. In an exclusive excerpt from his new book, *I Got a Song: A History of the Newport Folk Festival*, **Rick Massimo** offers a peek behind the scenes as Executive Producer **Jay Sweet** and a new generation of Americana icons help reboot a classic New England event.

Allen Ralph (Dispatch), Tonje Thilesen (Erez), Shervin Lainez (Stevens)

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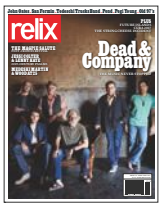

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LOOKS LIKE THERE'S A NEW KID IN TOWN

Though he hovered on the edge of the jamband scene for years as a Wetlands taper, Charlie Hunter fan and Aware Records artist, John Mayer truly arrived in the Grateful Dead world when he heard a powerful version of "Althea" on Pandora while he was driving. After an informal meeting with Bob Weir and Mickey Hart led to an unexpected friendship, Mayer was the catalyst for Dead & Company ("The Music Never Stopped," April_May 2017)—a new, true band that also features Bill Kreutzmann, Oteil Burbridge and Jeff Chimenti. The selection of the pop powerhouse for the group surely raised some eyebrows in certain Dead circles, and our readers chimed in on just what they think of Mayer so far.

Why is it that when something is "new," it clearly cannot be as "cool" as something old? For a community that is supposed to be so "open-minded," I sure see a lot of judgment here. Chill out, people, and enjoy the music!

Tammy Collins via Facebook

I'm an old, old Deadhead and think Mayer is a great match. His respect for the material is obvious, but he adds his own take on it with great joy. I'll take him over Trey any day of the week.

Christian Anderson via Facebook

Mayer has won me over. I didn't want a pop artist with the Dead, but he is growing as a person, and who am I to judge? He does a heck of a job and is helping keep the music going!

Joshua Weaver via Facebook

Mayer is the first to admit he is not the big man on campus with this band. Being a solo artist, he can be cocky because it's *his* band. He allows himself to fit in with Bill, Bobby and Mickey to learn what it's like to not be in charge, but to be more of a part of a "band." I dig Mayer and the Dead. It works, for sure, and it keeps the music alive, in my opinion.

Todd Cicardo via Facebook

Every artist has a different take on this or any music, but I'll say Trey really did well at the Fare Thee Well shows. Personally, I'd prefer John Kadlecik in Dead & Company, but Mayer has surprised me, for sure!

Sean Woodward via Facebook

While I've never liked when John Mayer speaks in an interview, you have to give the man credit—he's an awesome musician. The fact that he stepped right into Dead & Co., did his homework and is playing the music with such beauty and ease is something to admire, as a musician myself. Been a huge Oteil fan for years. Personally, he's my MVP of Dead & Co.

Sammy Blanchette via Facebook

Dead & Company

RECORD STORE PROFILE:

EASY STREET RECORDS, SEATTLE

Easy Street Records appeared in the right place at the right time. Owner Matt Vaughan opened the shop in West Seattle in the late 1980s, just as the grunge explosion was taking shape. Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder and Mike McCready, as well as the members of Mudhoney and The Shins, are among the Pacific Northwest heroes who spent time crate-digging at Easy Street and eventually went on to perform at the store. Lou Reed, Elvis Costello, Patti Smith and My Morning Jacket have also played intimate shows there over the years.

FANS.COM PHOTO CONTEST

Phil Lesh & Terrapin Family Band performing at New York's Brooklyn Bowl on March 13, 2017. Photo by Taj Mulhall Photography.

Want to be published in *Relix*? Just upload an original photo from a live music event to Relix.com's Fans.com Photo Contest app. Noted photographer Jay Blakesberg will select the winner from the group of 10 finalists that receives the most votes.

● Last issue's Fans.com Photo winner was incorrectly attributed. The awesome winning photo of Thievery Corporation was actually taken by Bahram Foroughi.

INSTAPRINT

Before Phish light up the stage at Madison Square Garden for 13 nights in July and August, and shortly before he embarked on a tour with his solo band, Trey Anastasio delivered three unique and intimate acoustic shows in March. Throughout the run, Anastasio reimagined Phish favorites and solo numbers—and offered some rarities in the process—all in campfire-like settings, as captured by his manager Patrick Jordan.

Danny Clinch (Dead & Company)

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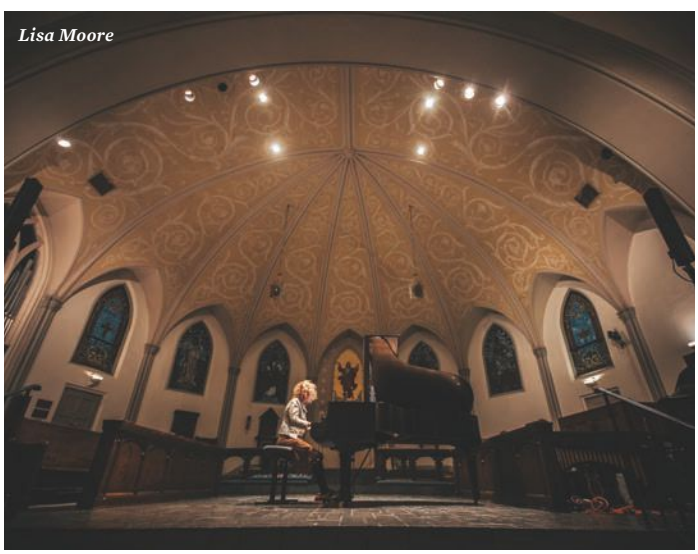

Lisa Moore

BIG EARS

MARCH 23-26 // KNOXVILLE, TENN.

BY GLENN KOTCHE & DARIN GRAY

Big Ears is an anomaly in the modern festival landscape—a narrowly curated, avant-garde-focused boutique event that feels more like a series of intertwined art installations than one of the big, broad, beat-heavy shows that dominate the festival climate. Big Ears' ninth offering featured a top-shelf blend of indie, jazz, rock, classical, bluegrass, folk and experimental acts at venues throughout Knoxville, including **The Magnetic Fields**, **Tortoise**, **Carla Bley**, **Gavin Bryars**, **Deerhoof**, Stereolab's **Lætitia Sadier**, **Dave Harrington Group**, **My Brightest Diamond**, **Xiu Xiu**, **Steve Lehman**, **Matmos**, **Colin Stetson**, Arcade Fire's **Jeremy Gara** and **Knoxville Symphony Orchestra**.

Wilco also served as the weekend's unofficial host; the Chicago sextet offered a proper headlining set on Friday and its band members showcased their diverse interests during a mix of collaborations throughout their stay. Drummer **Glenn Kotche** and his longtime **On Fillmore** partner, **Darin Gray**, take us on a tour of their weekend festivities.

GLENN KOTCHE: This year, I played with Wilco, On Fillmore and the cellist **Maya Beiser** (along with **Gyan Riley** on bass), as well as a solo set of all new material. The first set I caught was **Nief-Norf**. This contemporary-music percussion group wears so many hats. It's inspiring to see percussionists tackling so much adventurous and disparate material, and since the leaders of this ensemble, **Andrew** and **Erin Bliss**, were both trained in percussion by our mutual professor, James B. Campbell, it was extra special seeing them and their excellent students performing with such adventure.

This was my first time seeing My Brightest Diamond live. They were explosive, unpredictable and delicate—super interesting songs performed by musicians at the top of their respective games.

Gyan Riley had the packed house enthralled with both his technical mastery of the acoustic guitar, as well as its expressive beauty.

The composer and pianist **Frederic Rzewski** was next. Seeing him perform his masterpiece, "The

wm. Johnson (Yamsine Hamdan); Cora Wagoner (The Magnetic Fields, Wu Fei, Lisa Moore)

People United Will Never Be Defeated," was a truly astonishing experience. He has an elegance, power and mastery of the piano that's simply awe-inspiring. And, for a piece from the mid-'70s, it sounds incredibly fresh, relevant and, for me, revelatory.

I'm a longtime fan of **Alvin Curran**, so it's not very surprising that his was probably my favorite set of the weekend. Performing on piano and sampling keyboard, his set was a perfect balance of technical facility, deeply moving sound collage, humor and musical optimism.

I was totally blown away at how **Supersilent**'s improvising naturally coalesced into what sounded like a premeditated and expertly composed set.

I was amazed by **cup**'s balance of gentleness and rawness. And they sang! I know both of these musicians (**Nels Cline** and **Yuka Honda**) incredibly well and still found this set totally surprising and fun.

I caught the first half of **MEV**'s set before I had to run to soundcheck, but I found the interaction of these three seasoned veterans to be stunning. It's masterful, but still sounds completely contemporary and of the moment—all after having known each other and been collaborators for over 50 years! Their sound is unique, unpredictable and astonishingly full of color.

Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith's music was new to me, and I'm now a major fan. It's so cool that these intense and intricate soundscapes are presented as short songs—a magical set.

Jeff Tweedy meets **Chikamorachi** (Darin Gray and **Chris Corsano**). This was a totally improvised set of brutal noise—an aural affront. I'm proud to be close friends with each of them.

Gavin Bryars with the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra performing "Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet" was simply magical. I had previously only heard this piece as the music accompanying famed choreographer William Forsythe's "Quintett." It blew me away then, and hearing it now with live strings (Bryars at the helm) on a windy Sunday afternoon with light bouncing around the ceiling fans in the expansive Mill & Mine really was a religious experience.

DARIN GRAY:

Upon arrival and directly after hotel check-in, I made a mad dash and actual run/jog to hear Frederic Rzewski at The Mill & Mine. I stood in the balcony of this gorgeous venue and let the waves of history and sound pour over me from Rzewski's performance. The grand piano sounded perfect in this venue, and having Rzewski set up on the floor with everyone gathered around him was an especially nice touch by the promoters. I listened nearly to the end with friends Glenn Kotche and Chris Corsano—major props to the person turning the pages for Rzewski.

Chris, Glenn and I made a quick step over to The Square Room to hear Gyan Riley. I know that Gyan and Glenn have been friends for quite a while and, of course, I am familiar with Gyan's father's work, but I was, for the most part, ignorant going into this performance—just Gyan, solo, on acoustic nylon string. Engaging, beautiful and, at times, otherworldly—I loved every second of it and it just seemed like the perfect and much needed soundtrack to where I was at that moment. He was definitely funny and warm with the audience in between songs, which was met with joy and much laughter. I am looking forward to hearing Gyan solo ASAP in the future.

I had a long drive to Knoxville, so I took a moment to adjust, practice, eat and catch up with one of my closest friends, Chris Corsano. Outside of the music, this is the thing I enjoy most about festivals: catching up with dear friends.

Nearly 25 years ago, my friend Jim O'Rourke played me Curran's *Songs and Views of the Magnetic Garden*. It was a profound and life-changing listen in many ways. I have wanted to hear Alvin Curran live ever since and really didn't think it was ever going to happen. I still can't believe that it finally did, and that I witnessed him live! I am happy to report that even with a 25-plus year build up, it surpassed every expectation I had. I still get goose bumps days later thinking about it. Splitting time between grand piano and sampler, Curran dished out his (and our) entire history and future over the course of an hour and a half. A stunning performance, and just as profound as that random listen with O'Rourke so many years ago! Incredible!

I rushed over to catch as much of **Michael Hurley**'s opening set for Wilco at the Tennessee Theatre as I could. I had never heard him live before and wanted to absorb as much as possible. Just Hurley and his guitar—intimate and haunting from the back of the beautiful theater. The audience and I were absorbed and engrossed.

Wilco

I ended my first day of Big Ears with Wilco—a band I have seen maybe nearly a hundred times and just can't ever seem to get enough of. They started with the song "Radio Cure," which I don't think I have ever heard them begin with before. It's one of my favorite all-time songs. It felt like an incredible moment and way to just drift and ponder all the music that I had heard that day. It was one of those perfect times when a song just says everything you are feeling—an incredible band and, for me, the greatest band of their generation, bar none.

I have wanted to hear **Six Organs of Admittance** live for years! It did not disappoint. It was easy to take for granted by this point of the festival, but Big Ears has some of the most attentive and engaged audiences of any festival I have been a part of. They are definitely "all in," and it really helped with a set like this, which was mainly acoustic—definitely worth the wait, and I look forward to catching them again.

I walked in right as Maya Beisner was playing "Kashmir" with with Gyan Riley and Glenn Kotche to an enthralled, and, again, "all in" audience. Maya guided the band masterfully through an entire set of "covers," including a piece for solo cello and delays written by Glenn. I had not heard this piece before, although Glenn and I had talked about it over the phone numerous times. It's a great feeling watching and hearing your friends reach such heights and push themselves so hard in all kinds of new directions. I sat just sort of dumbstruck, marveling at what a dear friend is capable of. This concert was super fun, and the audience loved it and had a great time, even demanding an encore (a rarity for a festival set!).

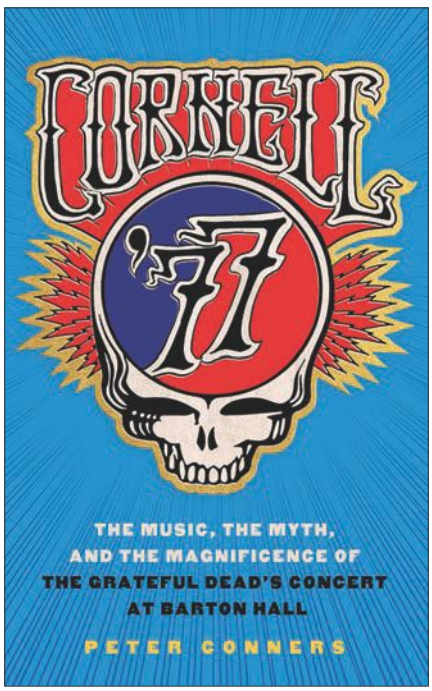
cup make and play beautiful and entertaining ambient music—well, ambient for them. I didn't know what to expect, as both musicians are literally capable of anything and I was just thankfully transported into a magical place, courtesy of two more dear friends. Again, it's just double great hearing people that you know and are friends with achieving such heights with their work. I can't wait for these two to record in the cup guise. It's gonna be a great album, for sure.

Christian J. Stewart (Wilco)

CORNELL '77

A new book from Cornell University Press explores the most popular show in the Grateful Dead canon. BY DEAN BUDNICK

TO COMMEMORATE the 40th anniversary of the Grateful Dead's performance at Cornell's Barton Hall on May 8, 1977, Cornell University Press has issued a new book devoted to what has become the band's best-known show. The Press tapped Peter Conners (*Growing Up Dead*, *JAMerica*) to write *Cornell '77*. The ensuing work contextualizes the celebrated gig from a variety of perspectives, exploring the historical, social and musical backdrop to that evening. Here, Conners looks back on the experience of writing the book and the legacy of 5/8/77.



Prior to writing the book, what was your relationship with 5/8/77?

I was as familiar with it as anybody. It was a show I knew was good, but I can't say I was any sort of 5/8/77 fanatic. It came up every once in a while, but I'm a guy who tends to do *years*. So I'll geek out on '73, and do nothing but '73 shows for a while, or I'll do '90, or my fixation might be a year in the late '60s. During the course of that, 5/8/77 eventually came up in the rotation, but it was never a show that I was obsessed with by any means.

So when Cornell University Press' Michael McGandy contacted me and said, "The 40th anniversary is coming up, and we want a book about the show. Would you be interested in doing it?" I wasn't quite sure what to do with it. But I'm a real fan of Greil Marcus, and *Lipstick Traces* by Greil is one of my favorite books. I love the way he can take a smaller scene, or a smaller topic, and look at it from all these different angles—pull it apart and have these great digressions and then come back in. I've always been enamored with that style, and I thought this is an interesting chance to explore that style, to take this one show and look at all these different aspects of Dead life, culture around the Dead and also society—what was going on in the late '70s—and to put it all through the filter of this one show.

Looking back on the process, what most surprised you?

There's a little anecdote about "Funiculi Funicula" in there. [*Ed. Note:* Conners writes that a Cornell student suggested the song to the band during soundcheck, when Jerry Garcia solicited requests.] When I first heard that, I wasn't sure if it could be true. So I ran it past [Dead archivist] David Lemieux, and he said, "I don't know the answer. I don't know where it came from." So, sure enough, I went into DeadBase, and they had also played it three times shortly after Cornell. Timing-wise, it made sense that it came out of that. I think the person who told the story isn't versed enough in Grateful Dead stuff to know how "Funiculi Funicula" became this quirky little fan favorite. So that was a fun side story.

The quality of the recording that circulated for many years is top notch. How do you think that impacted its reception?

There's no doubt that was part of the impact of 5/8/77 and why it became such an iconic show. Everybody I spoke to, like David Lemieux or Steve Silberman—who has spent a lot of time thinking about these shows, about eras, and about tapes and qualities—said that the quality of that tape turned their heads. It is a beautiful-sounding recording, which is why it became the secret handshake that people could have access to. So the recording quality was part of it—the power of Cornell—and, frankly, why we're talking about it now.

You share the perspective of Betty Cantor-Jackson, who recorded the show, in your book.

That was a really fun and really poignant interview—talking to Betty about it and hearing, "This is how I set up my rig, this is how I recorded and this is *why* I got the sound that I did—this is what I was going for." She has a great quote in there like, "Everybody wants to play in the band, so what I wanted to do was put you as close as possible to being on that stage—in between Jerry and Bob, or wherever you want to be." When you look at it like that, you can almost hear the air that she let into that recording space that she's allowing the listener to occupy. That was very intentional. Not only was it intentional, but it was also something that she honed over years of recording.

You also have Dennis McNally [the band's longtime publicist and biographer] speaking out about the "Morning Dew" from that show. While the "Scarlet> Fire" is stellar, the "Dew" is really the standout moment.

It is an absolutely haunting, powerful, stellar version of "Morning Dew." I was really curious to hear not only from his perspective as a writer and historian, but also as someone who spent so much time with Jerry. I asked him: "What would Jerry think of all this reverence for the show?" He had a fantastic answer that came back to "Morning Dew," which was, basically, he would be a little bit embarrassed. He would see it was so popular that maybe that was a gimmick and it was something he'd have to immediately take out of his repertoire! [*Laughs.*] That's such a wonderful and, no doubt, accurate portrayal of how Jerry would see it.

While many Deadheads are passionate advocates for 5/8/77, others will just as strongly champion the next night in Buffalo.

What I thought before I even wrote the book is if I could fuse the first set of 5/9 onto the second set of 5/8, *that* would be really phenomenal. There's an interesting thing that came up: Steve Silberman was actually quoting another friend of his (and I say this in the introduction to the book), that the best way to look at 5/9 is as the third and fourth sets of 5/8. A different space and time, but it's a big part of the same show. When you put it into that context, and if you listen to it, there's a real continuity—and I think that kind of goes for that tour, that East Coast swing. It's just stellar, and you can listen to one night after the other and be blown away. They were playing at such a high level, it's a joy.

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Radiohead returns to NOLA after a 14-year absence

Wesley Hodges

RADIOHEAD

SMOOTHIE KING CENTER
NEW ORLEANS
APRIL 3

Before their vividly intense and, oftentimes, brilliant performance at the Smoothie King Center, it had been nearly half of Radiohead's lifetime—14 years—since they last appeared in New Orleans. As has been standard on this jaunt of their *A Moon Shaped Pool* tour, the show kicked off with the glacial and nocturnal "Daydreaming," replete with a luminous display, before "Desert Island Disk" in the second slot. The set was enlivened by the explosive "Ful Stop," marked by bassist **Colin Greenwood**'s simple, yet forceful, rolling bass playing. It served as the stimulus for the first of many of **Thom Yorke**'s trademark free-form meltdowns, full of gyrations and moving body parts that are not generally involved in traditional dance.

The controlled and mindful chaos that makes up a Radiohead production began to unfold after the opening trio of newer tunes. Even on a wide-open floor (sold out, yet undersold on purpose), Radiohead's dramatic sea changes from song to song could bring on feelings of tense claustrophobia at one moment and sheer euphoria the next. "2 + 2 = 5" is on a long list of songs by Radiohead that seemed to hold the same urgency (applied to a different geopolitical landscape) as when it was written and released in 2003 on *Hail to the Thief*. Directly referencing Orwell, Yorke's ominous verse resonated all the way to the rafters before the song's thunderous climax: "It's the devil's way now/ There is no way out/ You can scream and you can shout/ It is too late now."

The glitchy "Bloom," from *The King of Limbs*, stood out from the middle section of the show as a fulcrum point that led toward a more generally rhythmic, accessible and fast-paced portion. "Lotus Flower," "Idioteque" (with Yorke belting the paranoia-inducing verse, "We're not scaremongering! This is really happening," which continues to carry a heavy weight in current times), and the noisy and sludgeful "Bodysnatchers" all bucked "traditional" song and instrumental structures.

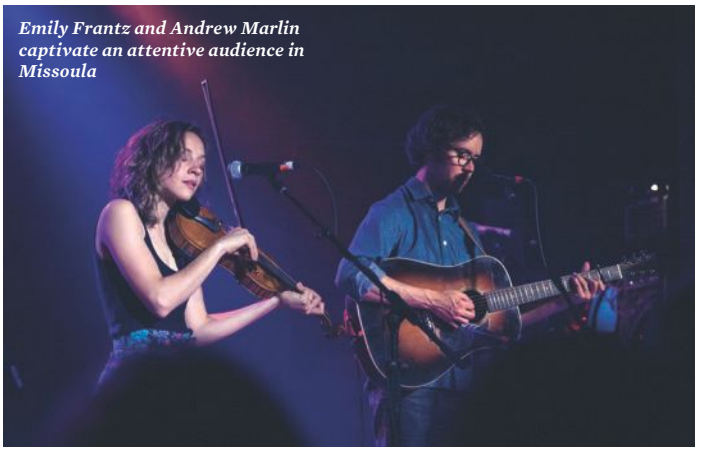
The triple encore was user-friendly to most everyone, from the ardent longtime fans to newcomers. The first of a few sing-along moments, "No Surprises" led off the five-song segment. Next came "Burn the Witch," a difficult song to reinvent live without strings that has been reimagined with some inventive, yet comparatively subdued flourishes by multi-instrumentalist maestro **Jonny Greenwood**, giving the number a more downcast tone. Yorke's bell-clear vocal performance during "Nude" garnered near pin-drop silence in the arena, and arguably served as the concert's most beautiful and sweeping moment. Then, a roaring audience belted every word of "Karma Police" as the first encore concluded.

Poetic and punch-drunk *Amnesiac* crowd-favorite "You and Whose Army?" began with Yorke gasping before delivering lilting, repetitive cries of "Come on, come on, come on," with a keys-led coda. As was the case in the first encore, a moment of gravitas was again paired with whimsy (relative to the meaning of that word in Radiohead context). This time Yorke delivered yet another stunning vocal performance on "Fake Plastic Trees." Offering one last look at the truly brilliant light show, Radiohead returned for an unplanned third encore, blasting off on a "Paranoid Android" that served as a massive exclamation point to the night and, from a visual perspective, the most completely enveloping display of the entire evening.

Wesley Hodges

MANDOLIN ORANGE

TOP HAT
MISSOULA, MONT.
APRIL 6



Emily Frantz and Andrew Marlin captivate an attentive audience in Missoula

Mandolin Orange write songs that possess compelling beauty and the quiet power to move listeners in mysterious ways. Whereas other bands—particularly those playing standing-room-only shows in clubs and bars—often need dance beats and histrionics to command audiences, the duo of **Andrew Marlin** and **Emily Frantz** taps into something that resonates far deeper to captivate their listeners. Their tour stop in Missoula was no exception; they hushed a sold-out crowd with little more than a few acoustic instruments and narrative lyricism.

Marlin and Frantz took the stage backed by a three-piece rhythm section, and Frantz's acoustic guitar eased the group into "Hey Stranger." The tightly packed congregation moved in closer, like moths to a flame, as Marlin's soothing voice—a hint of James Taylor with a Southern drawl—and fluttering mandolin fills rang out over their heads during "Wildfire," the second track on their latest album, *Blindfaller*. Afterward, Frantz admitted how rewarding it was to play for such an attentive audience, to which one man called out in response: "You're experiencing a miracle!" In a venue not always known for the most respectful crowds during mellower shows, it spoke to the capacity of Mandolin Orange's musical presence that most of the room seemed utterly enraptured.

The backing band—upright bass, drums and guitar—filled in the spaces in the duo's arrangements nicely, adding a dynamic push when appropriate and pulling back when either singer stepped up to the microphone. Guitarist **Josh Oliver** traded understated acoustic and electric licks with Marlin, whose mandolin solo stood out on "Hard Travelin'" especially. Still, some of the show's finest moments came when the band left and only the duo remained, trading harmonies and instruments for a couple songs, including an intimate and emotional version of "There Was a Time."

After the rest of the ensemble reemerged, the group gathered around a single condenser mic for a spirited version of "Gospel Shoes," and they invited opener **Eli West** up on clawhammer banjo for an instrumental jam and a brisk take on the traditional "Little Birdie," rounding out the set with the most fast-paced songs of the evening. An encore of "House of Stone" and "Waltz About Whiskey" wasn't enough to satisfy the audience, so the group returned once more, delivering a rendition of "Cavalry" that fell across the crowd like a lullaby.

Jed Nussbaum

Jeffrey Neubauer (Mandolin Orange); Mandy Pichler (Last Waltz)

THE LAST WALTZ 40 TOUR: A CELEBRATION OF THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY

THE CHICAGO THEATRE
CHICAGO
APRIL 9

Just over 40 years ago, The Band delivered a farewell concert at the famed Winterland Ballroom in San Francisco on Thanksgiving Day, 1976. "The Last Waltz" sent the original version of The Band off with guest appearances from Bob Dylan, Neil Young, Dr. John, Van Morrison, Muddy Waters and Eric Clapton, among many others, and yielded both a soundtrack and a 1978 film directed by Martin Scorsese.

In April 2016, a group of musicians led by guitarist **Warren Haynes** and bassist/producer **Don Was** congregated in New Orleans during Jazz Fest for a 40th anniversary celebration that has since expanded into a nationwide tour, which rolled into The Chicago Theatre on Sunday, April 9.

Haynes and Was, flanked by country rebel **Jamey Johnson** on guitar, **Danny Louis** on keys and drummer **Terence Higgins**, offered a two and a half hour show that spanned 25 songs and two sets. From Band classics like "The Weight," and "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down," to various covers and standards, the roster injected a contemporary zest into a legendary performance forever forged in musical lore.

It was a night of highlights with one historically significant song followed by another, each treated with the reverence and diligence it deserved. Johnson earned the most-valuable-player award on whatever song he touched—from "Ophelia" to "Georgia on My Mind" and "Up on Cripple Creek" to "Rag Mama Rag"—while Haynes verified once again that he is a musical chameleon, as he channeled Robbie Robertson's guitar riffs, and supplied vocals on Van Morrison's "Caravan" and The Band's "This Wheel's on Fire."

Taj Mahal sang a jaunty rendering of The Band's "Life Is a Carnival" and a bronzed version of Bob Dylan's "Forever Young" that roused the crowd into a sing-along attempt at the stalwart chorus. **Dr. John**, dressed in his majestic Crescent City style, as is to be expected, reproduced his "Such a Night" and "Down South in New Orleans" performances from the first Last Waltz with the added pageantry that only his fingers on ivory can provide.

Original Band pianist **Garth Hudson** may not look the same, with his bouquet of silver hair, but after he settled behind his piano, it was as if no time had passed. Hudson took an extended piano soliloquy between songs that lasted upward of 10 minutes, to the dismay of a few impatient audience members, but for many in attendance—who were either too young or luckless to have attended The Last Waltz in 1976—hearing "The Weight" and "I Shall Be Released" led by Hudson was the closest live approximation of that historical evening and performance. ***Mark Koenig***

Warren Haynes, Don Was and company inject some contemporary zest into a legendary performance

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RICHARD THOMPSON

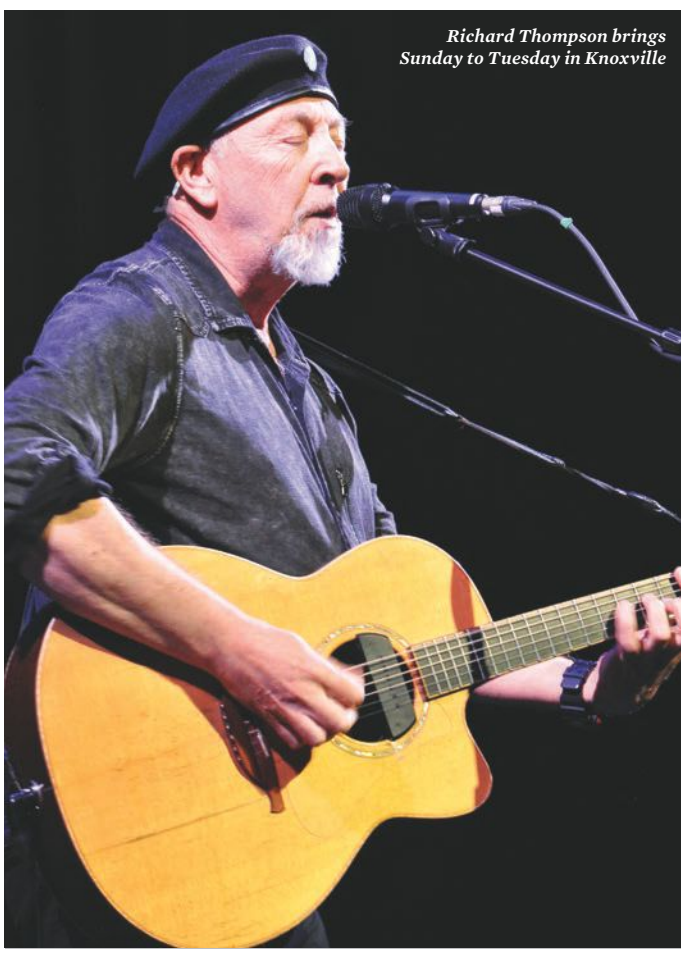
BIJOU THEATRE
KNOXVILLE, TENN.
APRIL 4

Suffice it to say there aren't many artists as specific and unique as **Richard Thompson**. Consistently hailed as an extraordinary guitarist, an insightful songwriter and a singular personality to boot, he is, by most standards, an iconic musician with a remarkable history—one who encompasses half a century of British musical tradition. His career began when he joined the innovative folk-rock outfit Fairport Convention and extended from there after he branched out alongside then-wife Linda Thompson, before he started pursuing his muse on his own. His prolific prowess has remained a constant ever since, whether with one of his revolving bands in tow or simply standing at center stage alone, with only his guitar as accompaniment.

It was in the latter mode that Thompson held court at Knoxville's historic Bijou Theatre, a grand 107-year-old venue clearly befitting his distinguished status. Thompson acknowledged his environs early in his set, adding Knoxville to the lyric of "1952 Vincent Black Lightning" before admitting at its end: "I love to suck up to my audience." He attempted to ingratiate himself even further, when, after noting his ties to Nashville's Americana scene, he inquired if there was some sort of secret rivalry between the two Tennessee cities. "Do you hate Nashville or do you love Nashville?" he asked with a mischievous grin and what seemed to be a serious intent to probe the relationship fully.

Thompson was self-effacing when it came to his own efforts, chuckling in genuine amusement when he forgot a lyric and lamenting the fact that his last hit in the U.K., "Wall of Death," was 35 years old. "That was a while ago, wasn't it?" he mused. "Which five of you bought it?" He went on to apologize for the fact that the song describes a wild weekend and that, because this particular concert fell on a Tuesday in the middle of a workweek, the scenario didn't really apply. "The next weekend is still five days away, so think back to the fun you had last weekend," he suggested, attempting to tie some thematic strands together.

While the crowd was clearly amused by Thompson's whimsy and reflections, it was the standout songs from his vast catalog that found them leaning in and swaying in unison. The tearstained sentiment of his oft-covered ballad "Dimming of the Day" had the crowd rapt at his concentration, and a version of the late singer Sandy Denny's "Who Knows Where the Time Goes?"—a standout of Fairport's repertoire even now—found the audience caught up in the emotional embrace. However, it was the upbeat material—accredited classics such as "Valerie," "Good Things Happen to Bad People," "Bathsheba Smiles" and "I Misunderstood"—that drew the strongest responses. While some people lamented the absence of "From Galway to Graceland," with its additional Tennessee



Richard Thompson brings Sunday to Tuesday in Knoxville

Alisa B. Cherry

The Jayhawks sing of Proust

John Patrick Gatta

reference, after Thompson returned to the stage for not one but two encores that included the venerable "Beeswing" and "I Feel So Good," the audience vigorously acknowledged their approval.

Lee Zimmerman

THE JAYHAWKS

MUSIC BOX SUPPER CLUB
CLEVELAND
APRIL 13

The Jayhawks' standing as an iconic Americana band that helped lay the groundwork for the current roots-rock revival was cemented years ago, and that reputation has only been reinforced since their 2009 reunion. Band leader **Gary Louris** played a cherry 1967 Gibson SG Standard throughout the 19-song, 105-minute Cleveland main set and a portion of the six-song encore, and his fuzzy tone provided the evening's signature sound. He left his mark on "Nothing Left to Borrow," a cover of Grand Funk Railroad's "Bad Time" to end the show and, especially, during the Neil Young-esque intro to "Waiting for the Sun."

While they ignored *Mockingbird Time*, the reunion album with co-founder Mark Olson (who has since re-exited the band), the foursome touched on all six of the band's other releases since 1992's major-label debut, *Hollywood Town Hall*, with a heavier focus on *Rainy Day Music* and *Paging Mr. Proust*—an approach that could have disappointed only the absolute pickiest of fans in the sold-out club. The group played Jayhawks classics like "Blue," "Save It for a Rainy Day," "I'd Run Away" and "Quiet Corners & Empty Spaces" along with deeper but equally sumptuously written tracks, such as opener "I'm Gonna Make You Love Me" and "Stumbling Through the Dark."

Louris, a Toledo native, offered a nod to his roots by playing "Somewhere in Ohio." Later, he stepped aside for drummer **Tim O'Reagan**, who provided perfect harmony throughout the night, to take lead vocals on "Bottomless Cup."

During his solo acoustic opening set, **Wesley Stace**'s witty banter matched the clever lyrics on "Making Love to Bob Dylan," "Better Tell No One Your Dreams" and "Mr. Tangerine Man" (reset as a story about Donald). Since The Jayhawks backed Stace on his new album, the members joined him during "I Don't Wanna Rock 'n' Roll," and Stace later returned the favor with a handful of appearances during The Jayhawks' headlining performance.

John Patrick Gatta

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WHITE DENIM · ELEPHANT REVIVAL
LUKAS NELSON & PROMISE OF THE REAL
MOON HOOCH · MARTY STUART AND HIS FABULOUS SUPERLATIVES · MARCO BENEVENTO
THE BAND OF HEATHENS · TAUK · CHUCK PROPHET
NICOLE ATKINS · SINKANE · MUDDY MAGNOLIAS
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THUNDERCAT

A self-described "man out of time" delivers a cross-genre record for the ages. BY JEFF TAMARKIN

If you don't ask, then you don't get. So when Stephen Bruner, better known as Thundercat, wanted a couple of special voices for his new album, he asked. And both Kenny Loggins and Michael McDonald said yes.

Just about everyone does a double take when they first see those names, but there they are—Loggins, of "Footloose" fame, and McDonald, the former Doobie Brother whose pipes powered hits like "What a Fool Believes"—providing vocals on "Show You the Way," one of the 23 tracks on Thundercat's sensational *Drunk*, his third solo release on Flying Lotus' Brainfeeder label.

"It just started as something I said on a radio station," says Bruner, whose distinctive six-string electric bass work is all over recordings by Flying Lotus, Suicidal Tendencies and Erykah Badu, as well as game-changing projects from jazz saxophone renaissance man Kamasi Washington, Childish Gambino and Kendrick Lamar. "I was asked who would I want to be trapped on an island with. I immediately said, 'Kenny Loggins and Michael McDonald.' People call [what they do] 'yacht rock' or something, but I was very serious at the same time I was joking about it. I have a lot of respect for them as songwriters and what they contributed to the music, being people that I learned from."

Loggins was intrigued by the project and invited McDonald. "I was spazzing out! We fell in sync with each other. It could have gone so many ways," says Bruner. "They said, 'What do you want us to do?' I said, 'I want you to do exactly what you've always done.' When we were mixing it, we were like, 'No fuckin' way!' But the more we'd sit with it, the more it would be, 'This really just happened.'"

There are many "No fuckin' way!" moments—lyrical, instrumental, vocal, conceptual—all over *Drunk*, the title of which, says Bruner, came about because "of an overall feeling of 'What's going on right now? Is everyone fucking drunk?'" Musically, *Drunk* is a pastiche of glorious sonic surprises that obscure genre lines. Bruner's songwriting has never been more complex and far-ranging; it's well beyond what was suggested on his previous leader projects, and his vocals are soulful and assured. After helping so many others sound that much more powerful, he's applied his lessons well and truly comes into his own here.

Before, Bruner says, the songwriting was often "hiding behind my instrument. It changed up for me with this one because the things that I had been working on, in and around it were so much more demanding of me. I didn't know what was going on," he jokes, "and now I *really* don't know what's going on. I'm a man out of time. I've experienced a lot," he says, getting serious again. "It's just a different time of life."

Working with Lamar on the hip-hop visionary's *To Pimp a Butterfly* had a particularly profound effect on Thundercat's own way of making music. "There's a part where you know the greatness of the person you're working with," he says. "Kendrick put himself on the chopping block. He took the risk of people not liking it or it being too black or too one-sided. But, for a moment, everybody understood what it means to be black. It reminds me of things like [Stevie Wonder's] *Songs in the Key of Life* because of the effort that went behind it. He just opened up everybody's eyes. It felt OK to be human, and that's one reason that album stood out. I remember seeing how this guy was putting his all into it, and it absolutely affected me."

At only 32, Bruner has already developed a bass language that has earned him a reputation as an innovator. He devoured all kinds of music while growing up in LA, with jazz fusion particularly having an impact—he often cites Stanley Clarke as a major influence—and then created something new when it was his turn. His ability to step into such a vast array of musical situations so readily has elevated his status. Recording and touring with many different artists, Bruner says, "has made me very open."

Drunk, produced mainly by Flying Lotus, includes not only the surprise visit from Loggins and McDonald but also cameos from Lamar, Washington, Wiz Khalifa, Pharrell and others. "It was a bit of a never-ending process" making the album, Bruner says. "It stopped when I stopped and, when it stopped, that didn't denote that it was time for an album. After a certain point, it took on its own life and we tried to capitalize on the idea of it being exactly just that."

Now that he has *Drunk* and the extensive tour in support of the album behind him, Thundercat plans to return to the ominous feeling that inspired the title. "I'm thinking about moving to Mexico," he says with a laugh. "I'll be like Billy Bob Thornton in *Bad Santa*—the guy behind the bar, drinking."

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JONATHAN MAYERS

BY BRADLEY TUCKER

THIS SUMMER, Superfly co-founder Jonathan Mayers will celebrate a few significant milestones: 20 years since his company's first show, 16 years of Bonnaroo, 10 years of Outside Lands and the launch of Colossal Clusterfest, a comedy-centric festival, featuring headliners Jerry Seinfeld and Kevin Hart. Mayers grew up an hour outside New York City and attended Tulane University, where he immersed himself in New Orleans' rich musical culture. After graduating in 1995, Mayers worked with New Orleans institutions Tipitina's and Jazz Fest, and he founded Superfly in 1996—the new company's first official show was the Mardi Gras offering "Take Funk to Heaven" in 1997 at the Contemporary Arts Center with the funky Meters, Maceo Parker and Rebirth Brass Band. (The first date Mayers presented under the Superfly name was a May 1995 Tipitina's show with George Porter Jr., Kermit Ruffins, The Wild Magnolias and Rebirth Brass Band.) From there, Mayers and his partners went on to create Bonnaroo and they have helped define the festival landscape for over 15 years.

You began seeing a lot of music and spending a lot of time at Tipitina's while you were studying at Tulane. At that point, were you more interested in working in music or just going to shows?

At the time, I was unsure of what I wanted to do. I always had different entrepreneurial ventures and businesses going on. They weren't related to music, but I knew that I wanted to have my own business. When I was in school, I interned at New Orleans Jazz Fest, and I was really inspired by the festival and the people working there. Around graduation, I thought maybe there was an opportunity to merge my interests in live music and events with being an entrepreneur.

What happened after graduation?

A lot of my friends left New Orleans, went back to wherever they were from and got "real jobs," but I stayed in New Orleans and wound up booking Tipitina's. At the time, this place that I loved and had all these amazing musical experiences at was falling on hard times—they were getting beat up by House of Blues, which had just recently opened in New Orleans about a year earlier. I had done one show at Tip's around my college graduation, I got to know the people who owned it and they offered me a job. That's why I wound up staying, and that's when I really threw myself into this line of work.

Can you describe an early influence—an experience or individual—that made an impact on the trajectory of your career?

Quint Davis, Jazz Fest's producer, was a big influence when I was an intern and someone who I looked up to—all the different talents he worked with, just his passion for what he was doing, his creative spirit. I remember peeking into his office and looking at all the concert posters on his wall and thinking, "I would like to have a concert poster from a show that I did." It just felt very real. He was passionate and he was very creative. That spoke to me. Jazz Fest had such a profound effect on the community and the diversity of the community. I was just really inspired by that.

Can you talk about your transition from Tipitina's to the genesis of Bonnaroo, and how you put that team together?

Around '96-'97, there was a change in ownership at Tip's, and I left and wound up getting a full-time position at Jazz Fest for about a year or so. During that time, I teamed up with my current partners: Rick [Farman], Rich [Goodstone] and Kerry [Black]. And we said, "While I'm working at Jazz Fest, let's do some shows focused on Mardi Gras and Jazz Fest—kind of satellite shows." I got permission from Jazz Fest, and we started booking.

We were always ambitious, and we put one foot in front of the other, thinking, "How can we make this sustainable? How can we grow this?" We didn't have a master plan except that we were excited by the work, and we wanted to do it full time. Eventually, we had to make the choice of, "Do we want to take this leap to really focus on Superfly and make this a full-time thing?" And we decided to do it. That's when we went beyond doing special events and we started promoting throughout the rest of the year.

It was a hard business model. We were coming into venues where we weren't getting the bar—going into an established place and just working off the door and competing with all of the established clubs for talent. We were doing a lot of shows, but we weren't making any money. We soon realized, "This is probably not the right business plan to sustain and grow." We were thinking, "What can we do where people are going to sell us more talent, and let us have a platform to be creative and do something outside of the box?" That's when we started thinking about doing a festival.

It was an interesting time in the live-music industry. A lot of the established, well-known promoters were getting wrapped up into SFX and becoming one company. We thought that maybe there was a lane for us to do something different. A lot of the bands we were working with at the time were bands that we loved in the jamband scene—the disciples of the Dead and Phish, these great touring bands that had devout followings. We thought, "Well, what if we brought all of those bands together in one place?"

What do you think made this attractive to Ashley Capps and Coran Capshaw, your Bonnaroo partners at the time?

Capps was an independent promoter. It was an opportunity for independent promoters to stand out and do something to counter what the rest of the industry was doing. There was an opportunity for us to be competitive, going into a field as opposed to going to major

Mayers, Black and Farman (l-r) at the inaugural Bonnaroo in 2002.

Superfly Archive

Continued on page 92

WOMAN AT WORK

BECCA STEVENS

Hail to the Queen

"It was a very healing process for me as a human and also as a songwriter," Becca Stevens says while describing the creation of her most recent record, *Regina*. The album—the singer's first effort without the Becca Stevens Band—grew out of her longtime fascination with Queen Elizabeth and became a vehicle to explore ideas stemming from what she calls "more feminine strengths."

"In drawing my inspiration from this theme, I was able to forget about my own fears and judgments as a songwriter," Stevens says. "We often will write something and doubt it if it's too personal or whatever, and this totally freed me of that because I felt, in a way, like I had a co-writer who I trusted—but it was this character that I created in myself."

Stevens came to call this character Regina—Latin for queen—and drew both strength and encouragement for the album from her newfound partner. The result is a sprawling, ambitious collection of 13 tracks, which the North Carolina native dedicates to figures from William Shakespeare ("Queen Mab") to the lead singer of another sort of Queen ("Mercury").

Regina wasn't Stevens' only collaborator, however, which speaks to her decision to release this record under her own name. "I wanted to open my arms wider on this one, to include people who are important to me and have more of a collaborative community experience," she says. That community spirit yielded an eclectic group of album guests, including David Crosby, Snarky Puppy's Michael League, and vocalists Jacob Collier and Laura Mvula.

But Stevens says that one of the most important takeaways from the process of writing and recording *Regina* is the new relationship she's forged with the album's namesake. "I feel like I'm just getting to know her, and it feels like just the beginning of something exciting and beautiful," Stevens says. "I don't think she's going anywhere."

Matt Inman

GROUP AT WORK

KIKAGAKU MOYO

Japanese Geometric Patterns

"Kikagaku Moyo means 'geometric patterns' in Japanese," drummer/vocalist Go Kurosawa says of his band. "The name has an onomatopoeic quality, which seemed to fit the sound of our music. We played together in the darkness for hours. The dawn had started to break and, as I closed my eyes and saw shapes appear on the backs of my eyelids, it was a powerful and transcendental experience."

Guitarist/vocalist Tomo Katsurada and Kurosawa started as a duo project but, soon after, the other three members joined officially. After jamming together around their hometown of Tokyo, they first performed as a band in 2014.

"We are inspired by non-musical media, particularly films, as we see a close tie between visual and aural influences," says Kurosawa. "We like to watch the color palette used by different directors closely. The black-and-white films have their own unique palette. Something visually exciting is an amazing catalyst for creating beautiful music, and we think of these images, colors and emotions when we jam."

Kurosawa describes their live set as being a "living thing" or an animal, as they merge improvisational sections with songs from albums, adding an element of unpredictability. "We think of music as having power as a means of communication, without the explicitness of words, but with a directness and nuance of its own," Kurosawa says, noting that music is a universal language.

花蔦鳳月 is a Japanese phrase that loosely means: "In experiencing the majesty of nature, you can also learn what lies inside yourself," Kurosawa says, describing the Kikagaku Moyo sound. Besides films, their influences spring from literary sources as well as natural objects. "Psychedelic music, although free form to a degree, is structured in patterns. Thus, nature, which is chaotic and free form but also structured around patterns, is intriguing to us. When we look at a maple leaf, we notice the way that the color radiates across the surface is different from leaf to leaf, but the jagged ridges of the edge are uniform."

Kikagaku Moyo released their sophomore full-length, *Forest of Lost Children*, and an EP, *Mammatus Clouds*, which was heavily improvisational, in 2014, and recently put out their latest LP, *House in the Tall Grass*, which was inspired by the seasons they experienced in different parts of the world while on their recent tour. "Our minds were full of various natural images, from the muted sounds of footsteps in a snow-carpeted Hokkaido forest, to the rustle of leaves gathered by the wind at the base of a tree, to the soft click of nuts dropped by a squirrel into a hollow trunk," says Kurosawa, who notes that "improvisation is still key to our style" and that the band is working on a new EP.

A favorite memory from the road comes from a stopover in Iceland, after playing a set in a small Reykjavik lounge. "That night, our sitarist, Ryu [Kurosawa], had a dream that he was standing underneath the aurora, and from a crack between the mossy rocks a melody was playing," says Kurosawa. "Now we can all picture it in our minds' eye, almost as though we had all had the same dream. We often use this image as inspiration for our jams. It was a mystical gift from Iceland." ***Amy Jacques***

Shervin Lainez (Stevens)

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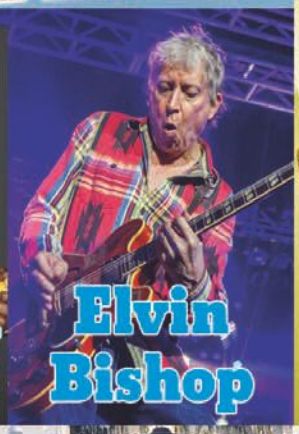
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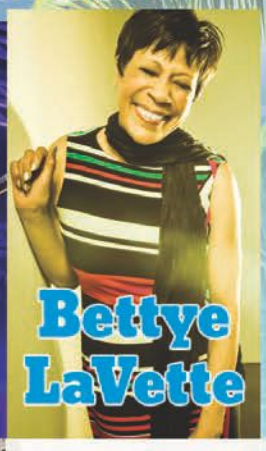
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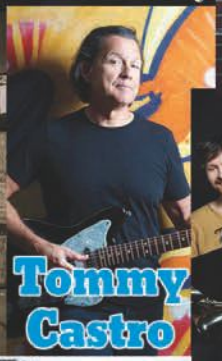
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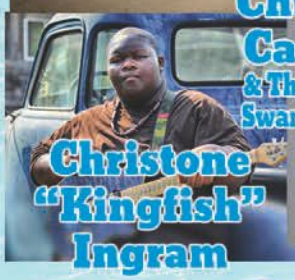
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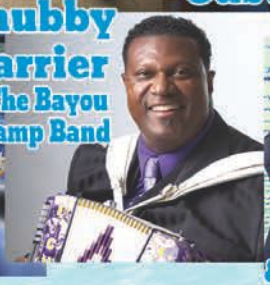
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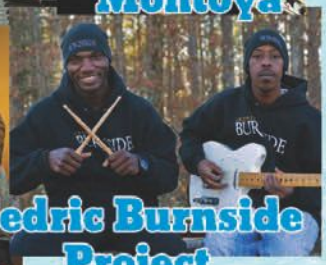
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5 ARTISTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Tonje Thilesen (Erez)

NOGA EREZ
TEL AVIV, ISRAEL
PROCESS POP

The music that Israeli singer and keyboard player **Noga Erez** makes with her partner, **Ori Rousso**, is deep, dense and atmospheric. She created *Off the Radar*, her debut album, with synthesizers, and while tracks like "Noisy" and "Muezzin" may feature mid-tempo, electronic dance pulses, most of the album is more cinematic and cerebral, moving at an almost glacial pace. Erez addresses political repression and the decay of modern society with music full of ominous synthesizer tones, but "politics aren't the only reason the music is so dark," she says. "Ori and I search for sounds we like. We create the atmosphere from our musical influences. Our vision is a sonic vision. Sometimes that really fits well with the fact that we come from this crazy place/situation. I would call our music 'process pop' because what we do is more processing than protesting. To me, pop, dance and genres in general are only labels to explain something that goes much deeper. Our inspiration comes from talks we have, the world we live in and the movies and music that we like." Erez played keyboards and sang in several bands before discovering the freedom offered by the unlimited sounds she could generate with a synthesizer and drum machine. Rousso taught her Ableton when her old band needed to use the program for their live shows. The pair clicked and started the collaboration that led to *Off the Radar*, and they're currently working on polishing their live show. "We try to make our computer-based music as live as possible," she says. "This became easier when drummer **Ran Jacobovitz** joined us. The way he's able to play the broken beats that Ori and I created in the studio is mind-blowing. Ran has become an important part of this band. It used to be just me and Ran on stage, with Ori doing the sound. Now we're working on doing a three-piece show. Ori will be there, too. Everything is going to be played live. This will be our little victory over the computer."

nogaerez.com ***J. Poet***

FILMSPEED **LOS ANGELES**
ROCK-AND-ROLL CONFIDENCE

Bassist **Nick Stout** and guitarist **Craig Broombaugh** moved from their hometown of Detroit to California over a decade ago to get acquainted with the California pop-punk scene. In the years since, the longtime friends and collaborators have transformed their musical aspirations into **Filmspeed**, a power trio that maintains that punk spirit through a wider rock-and-roll lens that, as Stout explains, stems from the varied influences and musical interests of the three members. "We are an eclectic bunch," he says, noting his own love of Less Than Jake and Run the Jewels, and Broombaugh's inclination toward the music of Butch Walker and AC/DC. There's one thing that connects all the band members, though: "We all love rock-and-roll," Stout says. "So we went forth with the idea to do all types." And although Filmspeed has been through a couple different drummers along the way, Stout says the group has clicked more than ever with current timekeeper **Oliver Dobrian**. The trio prepped an album's worth of songs for release this year, but their real passion lies in live performance. "For three people, we try to produce a lot of energy, a lot of sound," Stout says. "You gotta have fun onstage because, man, that's what live shows are all about. If you're not doing what you love, people see that. You need to be 100 percent confident and go in for yourself. I think that's what people see when they see us."

filmspeedband.com ***Matt Inman***

NOËL AKCHOTÉ

PARIS, FRANCE

VOICE ARTISAN

Unlike many working musicians, Parisian guitarist **Noël Akchoté**, 48, is an early riser. Akchoté—an omnivorous and wide-ranging player who has collaborated with other avant-leaning artists like Christian Fennesz, Earth, guitarist Mary Halvorson and many others—often wakes up at 4 a.m. to start working on what is turning into a massive series of recordings of Renaissance and other early music. He takes scores that were originally conceived as vocal music and transforms them into beautiful, breathing and full-bodied compositions played on guitar. Rather than arranging the music for strings, flattening some of the polyphony and contrary motion into shifting harmonies, Akchoté plays each "voice" part separately on guitar. So, if the music calls for four voices, then Akchoté records four distinct tracks of guitar, giving full expression, body and resonance to each voice. The results are hypnotic and warm, deep and luminous. What started as a study of lute music led Akchoté into an exploration of the Renaissance and medieval repertoire—he's recorded the work of composers that classical buffs would recognize, like Claudio Monteverdi and Carlo Gesualdo, but has also dug deep into books with pieces by obscure composers from the 13th through the 17th centuries. He's recorded dozens of these over the years, cranking them out like an assembly line worker—his method involves lots of steady online research, practice and recording and mixing. Those before-sunrise days end at about 5 p.m. with Akchoté mastering and uploading his work. "I really work like an artisan," he says via email. He's incredibly productive and prolific. Scan his 2016 recordings on any streaming music platform to get a sense of the flood of music pouring from him. His recordings have a raw realness to them, with occasional street noises and bird calls adding to the living-music quality. Akchoté is not some powdered-wig historical recreationist. He's not very interested in how things might have been. His sense is that life and expression now are much like they have always been—that people and music have timeless realities that connect across the ages. The guitarist isn't sure he's on a "mission," but he does think that he and other artists like him have a function in society, which is "to show how it will always be possible to be yourself and refuse the social games, competitions and so on."

noelakchote.org ***John Adamian***

JOHN CRAIGIE PORTLAND, ORE.

FOLK VESSELS

John Craigie began playing guitar in high school, although, admittedly, he wasn't very good until college. For years, you could catch the singer-songwriter around the Bay Area and Northern California, and then on the road in his Astrovan, before he finally settled in Portland, Ore. By then Craigie had honed his live show—soft, rambling folk songs driven by long, engaging interludes, filled with jokes and cultural commentary. Often compared to both John Prine and Mitch Hedberg, Craigie's tunes can oscillate between the rocking edge of Todd Snider, the existentialist melancholy of Greg Brown and the neo-traditional folk genius of Dave Rawlings. His fifth album, *No Rain, No Rose*, released this past January, infuses the energy of his live solo shows with the vibrant music scene he's now immersed in. "By having members of Fruition, Brad Parsons and the Shook Twins, you're getting a little taste of what's happening in Portland right now," says Craigie. "I was lucky enough to be the vessel for that." The community album, which also features Gregory Alan Isakov on a couple of tracks, is the singer's true introduction and, this summer, the 36-year-old will rework those 13 songs and other selections for amphitheater audiences when he opens for Jack Johnson on the West Coast. Johnson, who will launch his first major tour in years this June, originally reached out to Craigie as a fan. "We've been talking about some fun collaborations," says Craigie. "And I hope to make those work."

johncraigiemusic.com

Kiran Herbert

LOS COLOGNES

NASHVILLE, TENN.

FESTIVAL ROCK'S NEXT WAVE

Los Colognes' Jay Rutherford (guitar/vocals), **Aaron Mortenson** (drums/percussion) and **Gordon Persha** (bass) have a deep musical connection that dates back over 15 years, but it wasn't until they arrived in Nashville—via their hometown of Chicago—in 2010, that things really started to click. The longtime friends, who developed a shorthand playing together in various punk, church and high school bands, were immediately "inspired by [Nashville's] lifelong players" and the "pro gear and pro attitudes" of its musical citizenry, according to Rutherford, who likens the scene's very existence to a "miracle." The affable quintet, whose lineup also includes keyboardists **Micah Hulscher** and **Chuck Foster**, quickly immersed itself in the Music City's local scene. "Nashville is a place to go work," says Rutherford, who notes that the band has "played behind Margo Price, Rayland Baxter, Caitlin Rose, Nikki Lane and a ton of other great artists." In May, Los Colognes released their strongest and most cohesive album to date, *The Wave*, which arrives two years after the group's polished and referential *Dos*. *The Wave*'s origins stretch back to a series of "loose outlines" the band sketched during a two-week period in December 2014 and "a GarageBand demo called 'The Arc.'" Those recordings evolved from rough sketches "lacking Aaron's producer touch and rhythmic/arrangement vision." Despite originating in a mid-winter tour lull, the record's late-spring release date couldn't be more fitting for such a buoyant effort; the lead single "Flying Apart" could've just as easily been penned by Brent Mydland or Bruce Hornsby. "Man Over Bored" is a homage to the David Gilmour-led *Division Bell*-era Pink Floyd and the "incalculable importance of what those guys did." As Rutherford says, the quintet's "subconscious was naturally drawn toward the Floydian album cycle purely by nature of the context of the record." This summer, the group will take its festival-ready sound on the road for dates stretching from Sasquatch! to their most anticipated slot—their Lockn' debut. "[We plan to] remember the spirit of the Merry Pranksters," Rutherford hints.

loscolognes.com ***Wesley Hodges***

WIDESPREAD PANIC

Bassist Dave Schools dives into his band's new touring approach, studying Stravinsky and why it's time to tend to the home front. BY MIKE GREENHAUS

Dean Budnick

FESTIVALS WE DIG, RUNS WE LOVE

We've been a band for 30 years, and people keep reminding us of that. To me, it seems like we just started, but people have families and kids that are in college, which blows my mind. Luckily, I don't think anyone's a grandparent yet. [*Laughs*.] It was time to take it down a notch, and we figured that the best way to continue to play—and take our music to the people and keep everything happening the way we need it to on the home front—is to just whittle it down to festivals we dig and the runs we love. The way we look at it is that we've never really gone out of our way to change our set for festivals. We've wrestled with one set versus two, and we've wrestled with the amount of time that we feel we can legitimately keep people's attention in a one-set setting. But some of the biggest strides we made were at these oddball little festivals in the early '90s.

Before the big festival scene—which basically started in this country with Bumbershoot, Coachella, Bonnaroo—there were small city festivals, like Music Midtown in Atlanta, City Stages in Birmingham, Memphis in May and, of course, Jazz Fest in New Orleans. We hit those running. As soon as they started putting us on the bill, it was like, "OK, we got an hour, we got an hour and a half—we're headlining. We can do whatever the heck we want." And, just like everything, we took it in stride. Doing whatever the heck we want has always been our main rule. Sometimes we might think, "We just put out a record" or "We've never played in this town," but, though our fans might beg to differ, we're not gonna do a greatest-hits show. There's always gonna be an element of all of the things we do at a concert: a rhythmic element, an improv element, songs people can sing along to, a cover or two.

SETLIST THEATRICS

We start working on songs for special occasions, like Halloween and New Year's, months before—we knew we were gonna have strings with us on New Year's six months out. We might be listening to a Black Sabbath record in the lounge of the bus and someone says, "Let's do that song on Halloween!" Then someone else says, "Let's do a Black Sabbath song *every* Halloween!" And then a third person says, "Let's do all the Black Sabbath songs we've *ever* done!" It's always a group effort, and it always happens organically. John Bell had the idea to cast a chronological overview across the catalog for the December 30 show, and we thought that was a cool idea, and we all took part in putting it together.

Sometimes stuff gets rearranged half an hour before showtime, and poor [tour manager] Steve Lopez or [production manager] Mike Smith are making a million different copies of the setlist. Granted, when Jimmy Herring joined the band, he begged us to stop writing the second-set setlist *at* set break. That's just how we had always done it when Mikey [Houser] was alive because we would take the pulse of the audience during the first set and adjust accordingly at set break. That's why sometimes set breaks were an hour long—we were back there trying to figure out what songs to play! [*Laughs*.]

PARADIGM OF THE BAND

Duane's been in control the whole time. He was given 10 days to learn this material—he got into the gig 10 days before his first show. [*Ed. Note:* Duane Trucks started subbing for founding drummer Todd Nance in late 2014 and officially replaced him in early 2016.] He knows the paradigm of the band, so he knew that he was gonna have to learn at least 85 songs for the first shows before he could start repeating things. So he did his homework, and he had a list of suggestions. He'd broken it into categories of things that he might've played before—in some cases, he had played some Panic songs before with other bands—songs that he knew just because he knew them, and songs that were a bit of a challenge for him. And he went for those right away. That was when I was like, "Goddamn—he's for real."

As far as the dynamic goes, it's new every time for us. When someone comes in, it makes the whole band new because that's the way we work.

Continued on page 95

Diane T.
"I started out on this and it was the ONLY flavor that got me thru the 'beginning'.... now I'm just plain HOOKED!!! Haven't had a cigarette in 3 1/2 yrs (Aug. 9, 2013) after 42 YEARS of smoking!"

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Sandra H.
" have smoked for 51 years and finally quit in March of 2014 and almost gave up until my daughter introduced me to this flavor and your website and this is the juice that saved me !!!!!! I Love it !! "

Shari D.
"Love it, it's the only one I use."

Heather B.
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"Radiohead played the very first Outside Lands and returned in 2016. It was so special to have them at the inaugural festival, and even better to have them again." **Allen Scott**
Credit: Tom Tomkinson

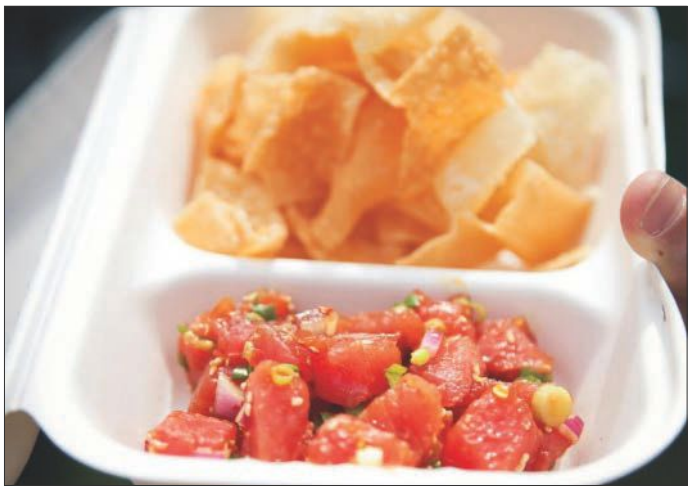
OUTSIDE LANDS

Outside Lands will celebrate its 10th year this summer when the festival returns to San Francisco's Golden Gate Park from August 11–13. The brainchild of promoters Superfly, Another Planet Entertainment and Starr Hill Presents, Outside Lands quickly distinguished itself from other Bay Area fests by not only being the first event to host music in Golden Gate Park after dark, but also by presenting local food and drink options as if they were indie-rock bands. Superfly Co-Founder Rick Farman and Another Planet Entertainment Executive Vice President Allen Scott offer a visual tour through the first decade of the "original gourmet music festival."

"This is the view of the Polo Fields during Paul McCartney's headlining set [in 2013]. A Beatle + Fireworks + San Francisco at night—it doesn't get any better." Rick Farman Credit: Josh Withers

"Jack White played a secret set in the woods for a few fans in 2012, accompanied by the Third Man roving record store. We've had a few pop-up performances at Outside Lands, and this one made us want to do even more to surprise our audience." **Farman** Credit: Tom Tomkinson

"The Sutro Stage is unlike any other—an enclave with a hill on one side. It feels like an escape." **Scott** Credit: Andrew Jorgensen



"We beat the poke trend by 10 years. Pacific Catch has served their ahi tuna poke with wonton chips at Outside Lands since year one. The food at Outside Lands is unbeatable, thanks to amazing vendors like them." **Scott**
Credit: Cameron Neilson

"The Gastro Magic Stage is one of a kind. It's where we host our food and music mash-ups—2014's Breakdown Breakdance included local butchers from San Francisco's Fatted Calf and Avedano's breaking down pigs onstage, amid professional break dancers." **Farman** Credit: Paige Parsons

"The Muppets' Dr. Teeth & The Electric Mayhem performed their only live festival appearance with us at Outside Lands in 2016. I don't think I've ever seen a crowd smile so much." **Scott** Credit: Tom Tomkinson

"We've had Big Freedia join Brenda's Soul Food for a Beignet & Bounce Brunch since 2014. It's a great way to start the morning at Gastro Magic, covered in powdered sugar." **Farman** Credit: Paige Parsons

"We knew we wanted to have comedy as a pillar of Outside Lands, so we created The Barbary as a dedicated stage for comedic performances, and it has since grown into a festival staple. One of my favorite memories is having the Improvised Shakespeare Company perform, with Patrick Stewart making a guest appearance [in 2014]." **Farman** Credit: Douglas Mason

"Wine Lands is one of our premier food and drink experiences, featuring winemakers from the Bay. It's a great place to spend a day—or festival weekend." **Scott** Credit: Jorgensen Photography

TODD RUNDGREN
WHITE KNIGHT BY DEAN BUDNICK

TODD RUNDGREN'S latest studio album is a collaborative affair.

Rundgren has been making records on which he is the sole musician since his classic 1972 double album, *Something/Anything?* While he's veered from this approach over the years, including his work with Utopia and some of his touring groups, this has generally been his modus operandi since 2004's *Liars*, on through *Arena* (2008), *State* (2013) and *Global* (2015), with a few breaks along the way (most notably 2015's *Runndans*, his 39-minute psychedelic sonic sculpture with Emil Nikolaisen and Hans-Peter Lindstrøm).

On *White Knight*, Rundgren invites artists such as Dâm-Funk, Donald Fagen, Daryl Hall, Bettye LaVette, Joe Satriani, Joe Walsh and Robyn to join in on his process of crafting new music, folding in elements of synth-rock, hip-hop, funk and classic pop.

Rundgren speaks with his typical candor when discussing the origins of *White Knight*. "The precipitating factor was that a label came and offered me money to make the record. I might not have made a record last year unless someone prodded me to do it. If a label does approach you and gives you a budget of any substance, you should probably take it and make that record because it doesn't happen as often as it used to.

"Once I got that offer, I started conceptualizing what I wanted to do, and that's when I got the idea of doing a mostly collaborative record. I live on the island of Hawaii, which is six hours from the mainland; and so, with my recent records, anytime I wanted to do a session, it was prohibitive to just call up everyone to say, 'Fly on over, we're going to record a song today.' So most of my records were just me doing it all myself, and I decided that I'd done enough of that. So I knew I was going to do a lot of collaboration and, about a year ago, I started calling people to see if they wanted to consider the possibility, and then, during fall, I began to put it together in earnest."

Lynn Goldsmith

COME

"Come" is one of the tracks that's just me. It's a setup for the rest of the record. It's an invitation to an adventure of a musical sort because you're going to be experiencing artists that don't usually appear on my records.

GOT YOUR BACK FEATURING KK WATSON WITH DÂM-FUNK

Dâm-Funk was my DJ on the first half of the *Global* tour. He's an artist from Los Angeles, and he's got his own scene going there because he does this new-age funk

thing. I asked him to send me something, and he sent me a track that I manipulated. I pulled some things out of it, added some things and wrote a song around it. "Got Your Back" is his catchphrase. Whenever I'd send him an email or tell him, "I need this from you," he'd say: "I got your back." So the title was just hanging out there; all I had to do was figure out the song that went with it.

KK Watson is a local up-and-comer out on Kauai. He hasn't broken yet, but I thought, "Maybe I'll give him a little chance to do something." He's just getting into the business now, and I hope to give him a little break.

CHANCE FOR US FEATURING DARYL HALL WITH BOBBY STRICKLAND

I had the track, and I knew that it had a certain sound to it—a certain old-school R&B, pop thing going. I had spoken to Daryl about the possibility and he was open to it. When I came up with the idea, I actually forced myself not to finish it so I would give Daryl the most opportunity to add *his* ideas. I wanted it to be very Daryl-esque, so he came up with the title and most all of the lyrics except for the bridge sections.

Then, I realized there was a section that would probably be better instrumentally than if we just tried to write a third vocal part. Bobby is my go-to guy when it comes to sax—if I carry a sax player on the road, he's the one. Fortunately, he had the time and wherewithal to put his part on it. As usual, it came back brilliant.

FICTION

That, again, is one where it's me doing everything just like I used to do. I might have liked to have gotten another artist to perform the song, but if I'm too successful at getting other artists, then I'm not singing anything—and I don't think my audience quite wants that. So this was an instance where I thought it was appropriate for me to do it.

BEGINNING (OF THE END) FEATURING JOHN BOUTTE

"Beginning (of the End)" is an interesting song because, when I first sang it, I thought: "I'm pretty happy with this vocal, but I really do want to get somebody that can take it to another place." So I called my friend John Boutte, who had agreed to do something. He liked the song, but the problem was his range is much higher than mine, so we had to keep raising the key on it. I had to keep re-singing the backing vocals on it in higher and higher keys until we compromised on the final key because I couldn't sing any higher than that.

TIN FOIL HAT FEATURING DONALD FAGEN

This was a fortunate coincidence because, as I was in the final weeks wrapping up the record, Donald came out to Kauai. He had actually lived there after 9/11—he moved to the island for a couple years. So I had socialized and done a little musical work with him before, and we were out to dinner—I think it was January—and I said, "You know, I'm finishing up a record and I've got this organ track I haven't figured out what to do with. Can I send it to you?" He said, "Sure."

He listened to it and started sending titles back to me, one of which was "Tin Foil Hat." So we agreed on the title and, since he was on the island, we got together a couple times and finished the lyrics. Then, I went over to his house with my laptop, and he sang the vocals. That was the only instance in which me and the other artist were in the same room at the same time, in the way you would think a collaboration was supposed to go. Every other collaboration was done remotely.

LOOK AT ME FEATURING MICHAEL HOLMAN

I wanted to write a song about the meeting of Kanye West and Donald Trump at Trump Tower, and what kind of mentality that produced. This is the soundtrack to that. [*Laughs*.]

I was hoping to get one of these young crazy rappers like Tyler, the Creator on it. He had agreed to do something but got involved in his own project and just ran out of time. So I got one of my older friends, Michael Holman, who was an original hip-hop entrepreneur, to put his thing on there.

LET'S DO THIS WITH MOE BERG

That's my old friend Moe Berg from Pursuit of Happiness. I gave him a call and I'm not sure whether he wrote this from scratch just for me, or whether it was an idea that he had, but it wasn't long after I talked to him that he sent me this. I was especially delighted to get it because it's *so* Moe Berg.

Moe writes everything on guitar; he never writes on piano. It's always great to get somebody who has a very unique, personal way of approaching the instrument. All he sent me was the instrumental part of it. I did a little bit of rearranging on it to give it a different dynamic and then wrote a song to go with it, hoping it would be the best of all possible worlds—the way that he hears things and the way that I hear things. If he had been writing the song, it would have been a dirty lyric about a girl, but I wrote a song about going out on the road and playing rock-and-roll, like "We're an American Band." [*Laughs*.]

SLEEP WITH JOE WALSH

This is the song that differs the most dramatically from the version that was originally sent to me. Joe sent me a version that had a weird drum machine going in the background, and it was a much more conventional approach. I heard the thing completely different. I rearranged it and eliminated a bunch of instruments and added a bunch of things, changed it a bit harmonically. By the time I gave it back to Joe, he didn't recognize it. He liked it, but it wasn't what he originally thought it was going to be at all.

I think there should be more of that—more surprises involved when you collaborate with people. That's why I prefer the method of me sending them files, then doing whatever they do and sending it back to me. Then, I'm not always pestering them to do it the way I hear it. They do it more the way that they hear it and, therefore, there's more purity in the collaboration because you're not watering down the collaborators to compromise with each other.

THAT COULD HAVE BEEN ME FEATURING ROBYN

One major challenge on this record was it was hard to plan with people's schedules and, of course, they also had to like the song. I had spoken with Robyn in the months before about doing something, but I didn't have it in my head what it might be. Then, when I got near the end of the album, I had something that could work. So I wrote the melody for a female range, did the reference vocals in falsetto, and then sent it off to her to sing—fortunately, she does it in full voice. She liked the song and it turned out to be pretty much the lead track for the record.

I've gotten a little grief from a fan or two about, "Why aren't you singing this?" But collaborations aren't always Tony Bennett dueting with somebody. They take a different form nowadays: Disclosure will write the whole track and have The Weeknd sing it, so you don't know if it's a Disclosure record or The Weeknd's. It's the same thing here.

Continued on page 93

RYLEY WALKER

RYLEY WALKER KNOWS A THING OR TWO about life on the road. The singer-songwriter and folk guitarist, who is at the forefront of the American Primitive revival, has described himself as "the touring troubadour who never sleeps" and recently clocked in an impressive 200 shows during a 10-month window. So when he finally took a short break to record his latest LP, *Golden Sings That Have Been Sung*, Walker decided to soak up his surroundings and craft a love letter to his Chicago hometown with the help of former Wilco multi-instrumentalist LeRoy Bach.

Walker didn't sit still for too long, however, and has remained on the road since *Golden Sings That Have Been Sung*'s August release. During a recent winter stretch that mixed headlining dates and support spots for Andrew Bird and Los Lobos, the guitarist documented his whirlwind run through a number of Midwest and West Coast dives and diners. And, while he still prefers a good game of dice or dominoes to Earth science, Walker also took a break from his favorite old-man drinking haunts to take in one of America's most beautiful natural attractions.

This grim breakfast may look familiar to anyone who has been on tour with a tight budget. These frozen egg and sausage patties fuel many bands across America for the day. It also doesn't help to sit in a van for six hours after consuming this digital egg content.

After a long drive and the load-in, it's nice to finally catch a doobie break and notice your surroundings. After a scary drive through a blizzard in the Rocky Mountains, we arrive in Telluride, Colo. A house there starts at $1,000,000. Last I checked, I had less than $1 in my checking account.

Here is Moon Bros. performing in Billings, Mont., to literally nobody except me, taking this photo for you to see. It was magical. I was there, man! I played shortly after this and nobody was even there to take my photo. We got chicken wings and pizza after so, in the end, we won.

This is the bar where we got pizza and wings. It made my tum-tum happy.

This is what Moon Bros. looks like after he fills up on good food. It's important to eat right and pray every day on tour. By pray, I mean drink in the green room and stare at the wall wondering why you do it all in the first place.

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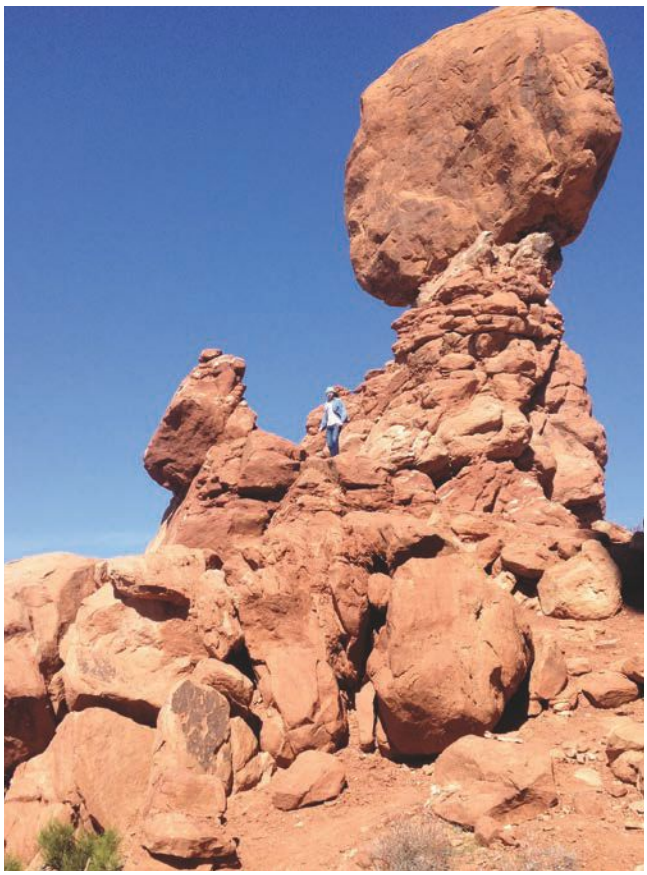


Of course, whenever possible, you must experience the natural beauty of the land that you are surveying on your crappy, indie-rock, career-in-the-shitter tour. This is Arches National Park in Utah. I had never been before, but it is beautiful! I'm very thankful to travel all the time and take the world in.

Lastly, it's important to discover shithole dive bars. Natural beauty is good, but old-man drinking holes are even better. The smaller the town, the better. You'll meet actual, real, human people and learn more about the area than you thought you would. Grab some dominoes or dice, and gamble if you get the chance. You might get lucky.

JASON ISBELL

Music for the blues (and reds). BY ROB SLATER

Danny Clinch

OVER THE LAST four years, Jason Isbell has reinvented himself through sobriety, marriage and, now, fatherhood. His most recent albums, 2013's *Southeastern* and 2015's *Something More Than Free*, explored those first two life benchmarks, and with his latest release, *The Nashville Sound*, he chronicles his world since becoming a father in late 2015. The Alabama-born Isbell, who currently lives in Music City with his wife, violinist Amanda Shires, recorded his new album at RCA Studio A, which is widely considered to be the birthplace of the Nashville sound.

"It made sense to me because Nashville sounds like a whole lot of different things now," Isbell says of the inspiration for the album's name, referring to the pre-Music Row days of the storied town. "I wanted to claim that title for somebody other than just what the town's been known for the last five or six decades."

While the title of Isbell's new, hard-rocking album with his band The 400 Unit—*Southeastern* and *Something More Than Free* were released under Isbell's name alone—addresses public perceptions of Nashville, many of the songs explore the challenges and questions facing America and the world today, particularly through the eyes of the newly minted family man.

A lot of these songs seem to be written from the perspective of a new parent bringing a child into the current global landscape. What sort of emotions and thoughts were you having about the world when you started to craft this album?

As far as I can tell, we're still doing way better than we've done in the past, as far as our particular country or the society that we're a part of. There are still a lot of improvements that are being made. I feel like, recently, we may have taken some licks—fallen down the ladder a little bit—but I don't think we've fallen completely *off*.

There are a lot of people who say, "America's at its lowest point," and those folks really weren't paying much attention to the Civil War day in history class because we were in much worse shape then. Also, now we're able to communicate in a different way—a lot quicker.

In pervasive popular culture right now, there's a tendency to reward bad behavior that we haven't always had to deal with. So that makes raising a child a little bit tricky because the whole point of trying to be a good parent is determining what good behavior is and what bad behavior is, and encouraging the former and discouraging the latter. It's hard to do when people who behave badly wind up at the White House or as heads of corporations.

And then you see people who have been underrepresented and who have a smaller voice in the world. You see their voices getting smaller and smaller and smaller, and those people being pushed to the fringes of society until they're ignoring everything except their desire for something different. It's difficult. I fear for my daughter, and I probably always will, but I think I would in any environment or any society. That's just the nature of being a parent.

Despite all of the darker themes, the last two songs—"Hope the High Road" and "Something to Love"—carry a more hopeful feeling. Was that intentional?

It was. I don't want to send me off feeling *too* miserable, but if my problems were all solved and everybody else's problems were solved, it'd be hard for me to find anything to write about. I'm more drawn to sad songs. That's the tradition that I find myself in as an artist, and probably always will.

On this album, I tried to effect at least a tiny amount of change. That might mean that out of the couple hundred thousand people that could potentially buy the record, or listen to the record, there might be five or six people that open their mind a little bit, or 10 people who are encouraged enough by some of the things that they're hearing to re-enter the society that they've left for whatever reason. And that's enough. It's kind of a zero-sum game. If you could better the life of *one* person, then you've probably done your job.

It was a responsibility for me to try and encourage people to be compassionate, and that's what a lot of artists are trying to do right now because things do seem hard to deal with. To me, it seems like I don't know the people that I grew up around and the people in this country—I don't know

them as well as I thought I did. That makes no sense because I toured for 16 years before making this album—before writing these songs—and before Trump was elected president. I thought, "Well, I know the people in Middle America, and I know people in the South—I know the people in the Bible Belt. I know the working-class folks; I grew up around them. They won't overlook the bigotry and the fear that this man *clearly* displays. They won't overlook that enough to elect him president."

And they did. I'm sitting back, thinking, "Well, I didn't know anybody as well as I thought I did." So what I turn to in that situation is trying to make myself more empathetic, understand people's perspectives a little bit better and encourage that in the people that are listening to my work.

How does that realization of not really knowing people you thought you knew affect you?

It's really the only heart-wrenching thing, isn't it? As far as I can tell, that's the only thing that has ever broken anybody's heart: the difference between what you thought you knew about somebody and how very little you really did know about them. That's the ultimate concern; that's the ultimate problem with being a human, being sentient and being able to consider the feelings of the group, and not just "I'm hungry" or "I'm tired," like another animal.

That's the ultimate question to me: "What's it like to be somebody else?" That's what art is always trying to answer. Something needs to [answer it]—it needs to for me. It'll probably steer my work for the rest of my life.

For a lot of us, there's a line of delineation between what happened late last year and what lies before that. For a lot of artists, that's the point where you wake up and say, "I didn't know a goddamn thing about anybody!" As we move forward, get older and continue trying to work, there will always be a well there. If you can go back in time to where you were in November, I think there'll always be a well to draw from because you can always say, "I wasn't as wise as I thought I was."

Father John Misty's new album, *Pure Comedy*, and *The Nashville Sound* touch on similar themes. Is this a trend you think many artists will follow, and how does that relate to the responsibility you mentioned earlier?

It's going to polarize musicians and entertainers. There's going to be people who are on that side of the line and people who are on this side of the line. As long as we can stay alive, keep the planet from getting too terribly damaged, keep women in decent health—because that's most certainly a question—and keep minorities as represented as possible until somebody's in power who can speak for them a little bit stronger, this could potentially give society a little bit of a boost.

I don't want to sound like Susan Sarandon and say, "It's great that [Trump's] been elected because now we're going to have the revolution we've always needed," or whatever the hell she said. You're missing a lot of the point there if that's how you feel. I don't think it's a good thing, but I do feel like if enough people work together and really focus on finding different ways to express the frustration that goes along with being out of control and living in the face of people who are so afraid that they become selfish, [then] I think that we could probably push forward *maybe* at a greater rate than we would have otherwise.

I like [Josh] Tillman's work a whole lot. He attacks popular culture in a way that I'm not really interested in, probably because he's younger than me. He certainly makes references that I don't always understand. But, at the root of it, we're probably trying to say the same thing. He's a really smart guy, and I like most of what he has to say.

A lot of people who are used to being on the fringes of art and entertainment might rise up and shine a little bit now because there are ears that are hungry for people to put things a certain way and explain all this. Everybody wants an explanation. We're trying. I don't know if we've got any more insight than anybody else as artists, but, in the process of explaining these emotions to ourselves, we might be able to turn on a little bit of a light for somebody else.

You're an interesting case in all of this because you do have a large fan base in states that voted overwhelmingly for Donald Trump.

That's the job. The rest of my day ain't very hard anymore, so it's not like I can sit back and say, "Oh, I work all day digging ditches," and somebody comes along and yells at me because it's not deep enough. I have to go to the gym at the hotel to get exercise. I'll be fine with a few assholes yelling at me on Twitter.

It's my responsibility to attempt to change those people's minds. You don't change *one* mind without hearing from a *thousand* stubborn ones, especially not these days, but I've always been in that situation.

I grew up in Green Hill, Ala. I was always a weirdo. I didn't play football; I played the guitar. I was in bands, and my opinions were different. I read when other kids watched stupid movies, and that's who I've always been, so that's probably who I'll always be.

I think a problem that we're facing is that people who consider themselves to be intellectuals are underestimating the intellectual abilities of the working class. The states don't *vote*. The state of Alabama did not vote for Donald Trump. The state of Georgia, the state of Tennessee—those states didn't vote for anybody. That's not how it works. There are a lot of people in Tennessee—a lot.

I'm not played on the radio. I'm not a celebrity or a household name, and there are a lot of people who work hard every day, and whether they agree with me or not, they can still appreciate the craft. They can appreciate the live show that we put on and the work that I put into writing these songs.

You don't have to agree with what the narrator is saying for a song to be good. That can be very frustrating to me because you don't see people listening to Johnny Cash when he sings, "I shot a man in Reno just to watch him die," and then say, "That song sucks! Who would shoot an innocent man just to watch him die?! That song's terrible! That's the worst song I've ever heard!"

So why do they listen to my rantings and ravings and judge the songs based on that, rather than judge it based on the craft of songwriting? If people are too dumb to hear whether or not a song is good outside of its subject matter, I don't need them to be my fans.

What is your relationship with John Prine—on and off the stage?

We've done a lot of shows together over the last three years, and our family has gotten to be good friends with John and Fiona [Whelan, Prine's wife] and their family. It's the kind of thing that I wouldn't have even known to dream about.

When I was a little kid, some of the first songs that I heard were John's songs. My mom would play them for me when I was a baby, and some of the first examples I had of *songs* were John's. I never would have imagined that, at this point in my life, I would get to say that I'm his friend. He's just as inspirational in everyday life as he is onstage. He's the same person onstage and off; he's witty and kind and generous to us all.

It's just a blessing to know the guy because it explains a little bit more of the mystery to me and, as a songwriter, I've always been trying to figure out what it is that makes certain songwriters great. I think John just keeps himself open and vulnerable, and really tries to pay attention to the details. He's still, to this day, as sharp as he's ever been so I'm fortunate to be able to call him my friend, that's for sure.

I GOT A SONG: A HISTORY OF THE NEWPORT FOLK FESTIVAL

How Jay Sweet and a new generation of artists revitalized a classic event while still honoring its animating spirit

BY RICK MASSIMO

Jim James loses himself in the world of Newport Folk in 2015

Dean Budnick

RICK MASSIMO'S *I GOT A SONG: A History of the Newport Folk Festival* (Wesleyan University Press) is the first book-length treatment of Newport, R.I.'s iconic event. Massimo's narrative begins as producer George Wein launches the festival in 1959 and tracks Newport Folk's highlights and struggles over the years to follow. Massimo, who grew up in Providence, covered the event for nine years as pop-music critic for *The Providence Journal*.

The following book excerpt explores the recent history of Newport Folk. Massimo writes that in 2010, Jay Sweet, who is now executive producer of the Newport Festivals Foundation, "told Wein that he wanted the job of producing the festival. He says he told Wein that if the festival didn't sell out within three years, Wein could fire him. Wein took Sweet up on it." Here, the author provides an overview of the events that ensued:

* * *

TODAY'S NEWPORT FOLK FESTIVAL doesn't match Pete Seeger's mid-'60s vision of a dozen or more stages with everyone from the famous singer-songwriters to the backwoods fiddlers, where someone could ask Seeger the chords to "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy" and get an immediate private lesson. But music and musicians occupy nearly every corner of Fort Adams for three days, and while the hipsters, the hardcore and the hippies traipse around the grounds together, the older folks in tie-dyed shirts are steadily and increasingly outnumbered by young men in fedoras and dress shirts and women in retro-'70s gear. All around, artists who have already played, artists whose sets aren't for another day and artists who aren't even booked stroll the grounds, many as excited to be there as the fans, hanging around in order to soak up the fellowship—a dynamic that Jim Kweskin or Judy Collins would recognize from the 1960s and Amy Ray from the 1990s—and, in many cases, to continue the process well into the night at various clubs throughout the city.

Newport "has begun to feel more like a state of mind than an annual event," the *Boston Globe*'s James Reed wrote in 2014, describing the festival as "all over the map. That, of course, is exactly how most young people experience music these days."

Yet, while at least two of the organizers independently use the phrase "this festival moves forward," the structure and spirit of Newport—as well as a lot of its success—come from a conscious evocation of the past by the organizers, artists and fans. It mirrors and profits from the Utopia days, echoed in the celebrated bubbling up of tradition-inspired music that's taken place in the 21st century.

Jay Sweet is proud to point out that he beat his own sellout guarantee to Wein—the Saturday show of 2011 was the first sellout since Dylan's return in 2002, which, in turn, was the first sellout since the Indigo Girls in 1998. Each year after that, the festival broke another barrier. In 2012, the festival sold out both days; in 2013, it sold out both days in advance. And in 2014 and 2015, not only did the festival add a third full day of programming, but it also sold its allotment of 10,000 tickets for each day before the lineups were announced.

The festival added its second

stage in 1998, a third in 2003. Since then, the number of stages has climbed at an even faster rate. The Family Tent, added in 2012, has gone from hosting a formally scheduled roster of children's acts to becoming the jam hangout for artists, particularly when the main stage on the north wall of the fort is being changed over between sets. (Indeed, adults vastly outnumber children in the tent and, like a good children's movie, the material generally runs to the kid-friendly rather than the expressly kid-centered type.) The small stage on the edge of the harbor was replaced in 2010 with a bigger stage set on the parade ground inside the fort, a mostly enclosed area that has turned into what operations manager Tim Tobin calls "a festival within a festival," with an audience and universe of vendors, glad-handers and star-studded guest appearances of its own. Performances began in the 100-seat Museum of Yachting in 2013, and the nooks and crannies of Fort Adams buzz with small-stage shows for radio broadcasts and podcast recordings.

And while the artists no longer huddle and jam in communal, dormitory-style rooms or Blues Houses when it's all over, the close of each day of the festival marks the beginning of after-concerts throughout downtown Newport, with impromptu collaborations and sing-alongs into the night—all of which sell out almost the moment they're announced.

The Rhode Island–based band Deer Tick first played at Newport in 2009 and immediately began to revive the tradition of music at night after the concerts were over—first at a couple of donors-only events inside Fort Adams, later at rowdier and less formal gatherings of colleagues and friends at the Newport Blues Café in the downtown. Their shows and others include on-the-spot collaborations, as well as a mix of originals and relatively modern rock classics. Chief singer and songwriter John McCauley says, "The festival ends early every night, and a big portion of the crowd, and the musicians themselves, don't want it to end."

"It's phenomenal because I really didn't see it coming," says Jim Gillis, who has been covering the festival for the *Newport Daily News* since 1985. "I'm not exactly Kreskin when it comes to these things, but I didn't see it bouncing back to this level, where it's become one of the hottest tickets in the country in the summer."

The experience begins months before the shows do, when tickets are snapped up. Acts are then announced piecemeal over the 21st-century word of mouth that is social media. The Newport Folk Festival no longer advertises and, since 2014, they haven't done so much as send out a press release—which only contributes to the paradoxical appeal of a sold-out event that operates under the radar.

Gillis recalls his first brush with the new way of getting the word out—during the 2008 Avett Brothers set that served as a virtual anti-[Jimmy] Buffett outpost. "There were a lot of kids near the stage. And I remember talking to them, and they knew all the songs. And I asked them, 'How do you know about these guys?' They weren't on any kind of commercial radio. And they said, 'the internet.' The whole formula has changed in the music industry. And this festival is definitely part of it." By 2015, the festival had so thoroughly absorbed the immediacy of electronic media that last-minute announcements and changes were more often announced through the festival's Twitter account or smartphone app than by someone heading to the stage to talk on the microphone.

The current success has led Wein to declare Sweet "as perfect as he can be...as far as what we're looking for from a contemporary folk festival." Not only are the tickets selling, he says, but also "there's a whole new feeling that started growing a couple of years ago. It's very exciting; I'm very happy with it." He adds that Sweet "always showed respect to the old folk festival—and he always respected Pete Seeger. That was very important to me."

Sweet not only showed respect to Seeger's model for the festival, but he also did his best to emulate it in modern circumstances. Upon taking control, Sweet immediately moved to eliminate titular sponsorship. The festival, he said, would never again be known as the Dunkin' Donuts Newport Folk Festival, or the Ben & Jerry's Newport Folk Festival or the Apple & Eve Newport Folk Festival.

"Nothing can be greater than the words 'Newport Folk Festival,'" Sweet remembers saying, "because the only way this is going to come out is to rebuild the brand as the one and only Newport Folk Festival...If you look at the first six years of this festival, it rocked the world. And that's not an overstatement. It changed the course of so many things. So I said, 'Why are we not using that?'"

* * *

SWEET TOLD NATE CHINEN OF the *New York Times* in 2012, "The artists understand that playing Newport is an invite; it's not a booking." The rising of a new generation of singers and songwriters means, to borrow a geological term, another layer of history on top of the Newport Folk Festival. A fan such as Sean Maloney, who grew up in North Reading, Mass., sees the Group's era at Newport as a piece of its history. [The Group is an extended family of festivalgoers who first met in 1985 when the event returned from a 15-year hiatus.] He came to the Newport Folk Festival in 1989 as a punk-rock-loving child accompanying his father as part of a "divorced-dad weekend" and remembers, "I was miserable...you can't listen to DRI and [then] go see Joan Baez when you're 10; there's too much cognitive dissonance there. But now as a 33 year old, seeing the connections grow and become solid and second-nature, it's a beautiful thing."

The sheer weight of history at Newport means that second-generation moments happen. In 2013, Merrill Garbus of tUnE-yArDs began her Newport set with an explanation that Newport was the first festival she'd ever been to and the first festival-gig announcement she was able to impress her parents with. In 2015, Brad Barr of The Barr Brothers explained to the crowd that his and bandmate/brother Andrew's parents' first date consisted of sneaking into the 1967 Newport Folk Festival to hear Arlo Guthrie sing "Alice's Restaurant." Hozier and Dom Flemons both credit Murray Lerner's *Festival!* film with inspiring them to become musicians.

Many of the younger performers speak of Newport and the artists who came before them with reverence. The singer-songwriter Joe Pug says, "When you get onstage, you try not to think about too much stuff and just be in the moment. But it's pretty hard to get on a stage with that much history and not at least...be self-conscious a couple of times, just realizing what a lineage you've been allowed to be a small part of."

"There might be some folk purists who might be insulted [by new claims to the mantle of folk music]," says Taylor Goldsmith, the chief singer, songwriter and guitarist with Dawes, who have played the festival annually since 2009. Goldsmith also serves on the festival's seven-member artist advisory board along with McCauley, The Decemberists' Colin Meloy, Jim James, Gillian Welch and Sara Watkins of Nickel Creek and The Watkins Family Hour. "And, maybe, they know more about the heritage than me. But I feel that if I'm watching someone sing a song, and it's compelling or illuminating in any possible way, and I feel like I'm getting to know that person through the music—it's hard for me to give more of a definition to the term 'folk.'"

Ketch Secor, of Old Crow Medicine Show, says the first song he learned to play on guitar was Phil Ochs' "I

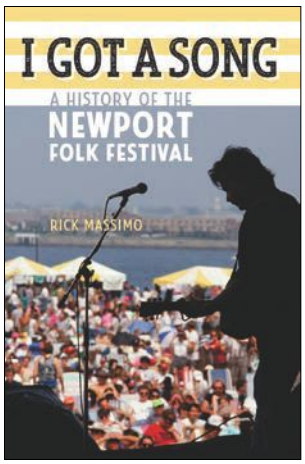
Ain't Marching Anymore," from *Broadside*'s compilation of songs from the first two Newport festivals. The band first played at Newport in 2004, when half of them didn't look old enough to drink. They've been enormously popular since then, working up to mainstage slots and headlining sets. His feelings about Newport are more complicated: "I thought it was gonna be the ultimate venue and, when I got there, it was a festival."

He says that when he plays at Fort Adams, he thinks about Doc Watson and other hillbillies from the old days—the people who would "ride all the way to the end of the line, southern New England, and be that far away from the mountains of Tennessee." He feels a bit the same way himself. When recalling the group's 2013 festival performance on a rainy Friday evening, he remembers thinking, "This is a crowd that has the most high-tech foul-weather gear... It looked like an L. L. Bean catalog shoot. I mean, there were thousands of dollars of rain gear right at my feet." Introducing Jim Garland's labor song "I Don't Want Your Millions, Mister," he "thought, 'God, who am I talking to? Who is understanding this?'"

Jeff Tweedy, who has played solo sets at Newport as well as performed as the lead singer and chief songwriter of Wilco, says that coming to Fort Adams for the first time, "at least in my mind, it had a mythology similar to Woodstock. It had played a key role in rock history, or something. But getting there and playing a part in it is, delightfully, more manageable. I questioned it when we were originally asked to do it years ago, and I stopped questioning it. If they're asking us to be there, they're obviously asking us to come and do our thing. It's not only a nice ethos, but I think it's kind of smart to keep their festival from suffering from Bounder's Disease or whatever they call it. It's gonna die if you don't bring in some other generations."

Others comment on the inviting atmosphere of Newport. "I was amazed," Jack White said from the stage in 2014, "that there was one place left on Earth that I could walk around and listen to bands and it was fine."

"No one stays an extra day at a festival," says Rhode Island–based singer-songwriter Joe Fletcher, who has played Newport several times and hosted a Thursday-night kickoff party in 2014. "[But] a lot of bands took the weekend off and skipped a Saturday night where they could be playing somewhere and making money, just to hang out. People don't do that anywhere else...It's just got a magical feel—the water, the little peninsula of land, the fort—it's aesthetically beautiful. It's 10,000 people; it's not a sea."



And while Deer Tick's McCauley, like Sweet, first experienced the festival by seeing Los Lobos in 1989, he says, "We do our best to preserve the traditions there: an appreciation of early American music, and beyond that...to other countries. And an anything-can-happen, communal kind of musical spirit. You never know who might hop onstage with someone, and that doesn't really happen at other festivals. At other festivals, it doesn't happen organically; it's set up by the person who's running the festival...[That's] a disaster for us."

Thao Nguyen of Thao & the Get Down Stay Down made her first Newport appearance in 2014 but says that she learned the traditions of folk music in school. "The Newport Folk Festival was the beacon for me because the reason that I got into guitar-playing...was old country, folk, blues, old-time Appalachian—and I knew that everybody I was a huge fan of had come through here. I studied them at school because it was such a pivotal part of American history and politics as well." Even if the festival didn't have decades of history behind it, Nguyen says, "It's still the best festival that we play... And maybe that's out of respect for the history and tradition of this festival, but I also think that that's what the creators have promoted and what they stay true to. Everybody relaxes and breathes a sigh of relief."

Sweet's booking ethos of "a curatorial aspect mixed with a familial aspect" may find its prime example in Jim James, who has played Newport with everything from the Monsters of Folk to his own group, My Morning Jacket, to solo acoustic sets and mostly instrumental performances with a semi-orchestra. He's also hopped onstage with seemingly anyone who would have him, ranging from singer-songwriter legend John Prine to cellist Ben Sollee to the Preservation Hall Jazz Band. James calls Newport "a magical place."

"For me, [Newport] is the festival that you go to for two or three days, and you get lost in the world of it," he says. "The world of Newport is such a unique and strange world because it's like you're in some bizarre, alternate-universe amusement park. The site of the festival itself, this old fort—and you're playing looking at the water, looking at all the boats. It's like everything's drawn in pastels or something. Finding yourself rehearsing in some crazy mansion the size of a museum that's now just a tourist attraction...there's just something about the whole place. I'm a big believer in spirits and ghosts and whatever forces are working that we're not fully aware of, and I just feel like Newport is full of ghosts. It's haunted, in a good way—and in some dark ways, there are some dark ghosts looming there as well. But that kind of makes it all part of the intrigue of the place.

"The whole process of Newport Folk is so funny because so many people consider it a folk festival, and so many people consider folk music to be a person and a guitar. That's so many people's definition of quote-unquote 'folk music.' But Dylan, most obviously, most famously, kind of proved that folk could be a guy with an electric guitar. So my definition of Newport Folk is whatever I'm personally doing at the moment...And I like playing acoustic guitar by myself, but I also like playing with a full band, and weird electronic stuff, or different types of music. 'Folk music' is a limitless term that has come to mean 'a guy with an acoustic guitar.' But hip-hop is folk music; there are lots of different types of music that is folk music. I think the festival is starting to grow and embrace that a little bit more."

Some of the more outré additions to the Newport bill in recent years have included Beck, the singer-songwriter who made electronics into the backbone of much of his music, particularly on the hit "Loser;" and tUnEyArDs, a virtual one-woman orchestra of drum loops, percussion and ukulele. Sweet says, "I will argue all day long, with anyone, about why Beck is a folk artist." He's a modern-day, electro equivalent to a one-man jug band; his acoustic mini-set with ageless Ramblin' Jack Elliott in 2013 speaks to Sweet's point. So does the argument Gene Youngblood made in 1967: "This new music may have its roots more in technology than in turf but, because of our affluent and technological society, the Moog Synthesizer, the wah-wah peddle [*sic*] and the Vox amp are as accessible and intrinsic to the new troubadour as the jug and Jew's Harp were to the mountain moaner. And if the message has changed from dirt to dope, it is still a message, still personal, still reflective of the attitudes of the 'folk.'"

SEARCHING FOR MAYHEM

With the help of TV on the Radio's Dave Sitek, Preservation Hall Jazz Band turns a recent Cuban voyage into an inspired 21st-century New Orleans anthem. BY TIM DONNELLY

THERE'S A SCENE in the upcoming documentary *A Tuba to Cuba* that's a pure history lesson. Two elderly gentlemen of different linguistic backgrounds have congregated in the "House of Jazz" at Havana's Santa Amalia. They can't communicate verbally, so they speak to each other through clapping, smiling, music and dance.

The two men then stand next to each other. The man in the elegant suit and tie counts off the beat with a hand clap and the tap of his bottle-cap-bottomed white shoes. The sound of the clarinet from the other man fills the concrete room, and his new pal does an elegant tap dance along to the standard "Tea for Two" in perfect time.

After the shared moment, the men laugh, poke each other and hug like lifelong friends. Though Preservation Hall Jazz Band clarinetist Charlie Gabriel and Havana's Papito Penalver have never physically met before this moment, they share a deep spiritual connection. Their souls bind them together, and though it's a beautiful moment, the backstory behind that connection is far darker.

The framework for that moment and *So It Is,* Preservation Hall Jazz Band's follow-up studio album to their first album of all-original material, 2013's *That's It!*, was laid centuries ago by African slaves and Haitian refugees, those who escaped slavery and those sold to the Americas by the French and Spanish. These slaves and refugees came from the Greater Antilles, made up of Jamaica, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, the Cayman Islands and Cuba. Most had zero choice in their destinations, and some found their way to New Orleans, the northernmost city in the Caribbean.

The sounds of their ancestral homelands had been carried with them by the current of the Caribbean waters. This sound eventually morphed into what is known today as New Orleans jazz. It not only shares the same bloodline as the music played in the streets of Havana and the hills of Santiago, but it also shares an African heart.

David Kunian, the music curator at the Louisiana State Museum, has traced the migration of sound to New Orleans. "When the Haitian Revolution spawned a mass exodus from Haiti, some came to New Orleans and some went to Cuba," he says. "In 1809, while fighting the Napoleonic Wars, Spain forced the former French Haitians out of Cuba. Over 10,000 came to New Orleans, which increased the New Orleans population significantly in a very short time. This Cuba-New Orleans connection continued until the Cuban Revolution. Cuba was New Orleans' biggest trading partner. The Cubans coming to New Orleans influenced much of the music. Professor Longhair's boogie-rhumba piano stylings are an update of Cuban polyrhythms and a testament to this lineage."

> "They're seeking us out because they are curious that there is something that could be learned and shared at the same time. The sit-ins are all very personal and meaningful." BEN JAFFE

And, today, Preservation Hall Jazz Band has added a few more chapters to the ever-evolving story of this music. *So It Is* plays out as both a romp and a living historical document—joy derived from the rhythms and melodies laid down by the sorrow of slaves and immigrants as a thorough piece of modern work that sets the standard for jazz in America.

Preservation Hall's creative director/upright bassist/tuba player/percussionist Ben Jaffe decided not to tap a traditional or Caribbean-influenced producer to sit at the helm for *So It Is.* Instead, he selected TV on the Radio's Dave Sitek, who, in addition to his own cutting-edge band, has guided Jane's Addiction, Foals, Yeah Yeah Yeahs and Santigold, among others, in the studio.

"We connected with Dave and he inspired us as a band to go as far as we could," Jaffe says. "Dave told me, 'You guys could easily make another great album that's exactly like *That's It!*, and you can continue to be that band. But there is something deeper and more connected that you haven't discovered yet, and that's up to you guys to figure out.'"

The album's roots stretch back to a life-changing trip that the members of Preservation Hall Jazz Band took to Cuba in 2015. President Obama started easing travel restrictions to Cuba during his second term and, after he lifted a longstanding travel ban, the country's rich blend of cultures has started to become a source of creative inspiration for many visitors.

"A gigantic light bulb went off, and we realized that New Orleans music is not just a thing by itself; it's part of something much bigger. That realization was almost like having a religious epiphany," says Jaffe. "Going to Cuba answered a bunch of questions we didn't even know existed, and we had all these amazing experiences and interactions that combined with where the band was."

* * *

THOUGH THE PRESERVATION Hall Jazz Band has been a beloved local institution since around the time that Allan and Sandra Jaffe, Ben's parents, founded the Preservation Hall venue in 1961, the group has moved outside traditional New Orleans circles in recent years. After Hurricane Katrina in 2005 served as an eerie reminder of how precious and important the city is for American music, Ben Jaffe realized his calling and, in recent years, Pres Hall has shared the stage and sat in with such diverse legends as the Foo Fighters, Arcade Fire, Bob Weir, The Black Keys, Stevie Wonder, The Del McCoury Band, Jack Johnson, My Morning Jacket, Drive-By Truckers, Yonder Mountain String Band and members of the E Street Band. This summer, they'll perform at Red Rocks with Beck.

"This has always been a band where the membership has always evolved," Jaffe says of Pres Hall's evolution.

"They're seeking us out because they are curious that there is something that could be learned and shared at the same time. The sit-ins are all very personal and meaningful," Jaffe says. "Each one is a learning experience for us; one of the rarest things to happen between artists, ever, is to collaborate. The artists have to be in a certain state of mind, at a certain time and in a certain place. It doesn't happen often but, to us, it happens remarkably often. That really speaks to the musicians in the band and to the principles that Preservation Hall is built on, the idea of inclusiveness."

Jaffe's French Quarter venue still hosts multiple sets of music every night. While he leads Preservation Hall Jazz Band on the road, members of the group's extended family and various all-star combos hold down the space. Guest musicians from all corners of the world, and associated with all types of genres, perform regularly, and Jay Z, Billy Joel, Amy Schumer, Kevin Durant and Robert Smith of The Cure have all recently taken in shows at the intimate space. Though surrounded by the Bourbon Street debauchery, Preservation Hall as an organization and foundation is able to take the notion of "supporting good times" and put it into positive action.

Under the Preservation Hall Foundation umbrella, Jaffe and his bandmates have a successful music program that not only helps teach music to kids and employ elders, but also helps spread the love globally, bringing instruments and care packages on their trips to Cuba—instruments that would cost most Cubans several months of wages. The members of Preservation Hall remain engaged on the homefront too, continuing the tradition of second-line parades and jazz funerals with a modern flair. After the death of David Bowie, they joined forces with their new neighbor and pal Win Butler and his band Arcade Fire to lead a second-line parade in Bowie's memory.

"Our mission and our core values haven't changed much; they have evolved, to the point where we've become missionaries for what we do, and Preservation Hall has become an institution, a destination, a chapel that people seek out because it is rare," Jaffe says. "Musicians are constantly seeking inspiration, looking around every corner, traveling to remote places because we've heard a place is special. That's the journey of the musician as an artist and we have grown into the skin of an artist."

The present-day Preservation Hall band reflects the precise blend of what makes up modern-day New Orleans: traditional, alternative prodigies with God-given talent, the church and the sound of the street. Their current lineup is a mix of new members and veterans. Within the past two years, pianist/Wurlitzer wiz/organist Kyle Roussel, trumpeter Branden Lewis and drummer Walter Harris have joined Jaffe, *So It Is* co-arranger Gabriel, saxophonist Clint Maedgen and trombonist Ronell Johnson.

"This has always been a band where the membership has always evolved," Jaffe adds. "The band that became popular in the '70s was not the first Preservation Hall band. That was the second or third evolution of the band.

There's a 55-year age gap between the 84-year-old-Gabriel and the 29-year-old Roussel, yet they seamlessly blend together throughout *So It Is*. Despite being under 30, Roussel—a prodigy with an old soul—acts and performs with that distinct New Orleans cool that all of the great Crescent City piano greats possessed in their deliveries, except for those with a moniker like "Jelly Roll," "Champion Jack," "Fess" or "Fats."

Jaffe knows Roussel's situation well because he has

witnessed it his whole life. "New Orleans is one of these rare places on Earth where you start playing music at such a young age. By the time you are 18, 19, 20 years old, you have already been performing in front of people for half of your life," Jaffe, who grew up at the club, says with a chuckle. "I laugh because there was no 'first time' I played in front of somebody. I was 3. We are all teachers and there's always going to be a next generation, which I find very inspiring. It's very important to have younger members perform shoulder-to-shoulder with someone like Charlie Gabriel. You have to have that firsthand experience. It is like being an apostle, and you come into a band like this and play with Charlie Gabriel for 10 years. Now, it's your gift to share with the world."

* * *

WALTER HARRIS WAS RAISED IN the Lower Ninth Ward—the disadvantaged neighborhood that gave the world Fats Domino—and the streets almost took his life. He got caught up in the seemingly endless cycle of despair. Though he pulled himself out of it, it remains with him—not the actual life, but the respect and self-assurance that comes with being from a warrior culture and surviving it. With a sleepy white cat named Sweets at his feet, he's lounging in the back room of Preservation Hall, a sacred creative space where few of the many talented from his neighborhood have tread.

"I have been playing drums for over 35 years," Harris says. "I started in my grandfather's gospel quartet in the Lower Ninth Ward. The second part was with the Mardi Gras Indians with the Ninth Ward Hunters."

The beat he inherited from the Mardi Gras Indians is one of the most distinct on the planet. It's the syncopation of "Big Chief" or "Iko Iko." He's voracious, intense, amazing. Jaffe knew that when he brought Harris in.

"Walt brings all of that with him to the band," he says. "It is a new combination that adds to the band. It's one thing to copy those rhythms; it's another thing to *be* those rhythms, and that is what the band is. It is an honest representation of who we are."

Photographer Danny Clinch and Gaslight Anthem's Brian Fallon sitting in with Pres Hall at New Jersey's Asbury Park Music & Film Festival this spring.

Preservation Hall Jazz Band offer an interlocking set with fellow American roots torchbearers Del McCoury Band at Bonnaroo 2011.

Harris' manner is mellow and welcoming, almost country-like, as the Lower Ninth Ward was in the '30s and '40s, when chickens roamed freely and horses were hitched in backyards.

"I have this influence of country, hip-hop, and rhythm and blues. I have so many things on the table that I didn't want to leave out anything because it is all New Orleans."

He was able to freely use his influences to arrange the music on the *So It Is* project, surprisingly, without any rules for an organization primarily known for playing traditional jazz. It was Jaffe who said, "Just do you," shaking his head at the look of amazement on Harris' face.

Harris leans forward in his hundred-year-old chair and looks around the room before saying, "The one thing that we all share is love—genuine love for one another. Everybody has compassion, and we give our all for each other. It takes a lot of love. The music represents the love. All the times we are all together? Man, we are happy."

* * *

SAXOPHONIST CLINT MAEDGEN is a punk-rocker at heart, with a tender spot for Tom Waits and drum loops. On this winter day, he's wearing a black suit and fedora, sporting a pencil-thin moustache and his omnipresent red bullhorn. Behind him are stacks of a dozen small black-and-white televisions set to static screens. Bingo sheets line the walls in lieu of more traditional wallpaper. Shelves are filled with obscure sound-making toys and instruments, purchased on one of his many tours across the globe. Every inch of space is adorned with some kind of figurine, instrument or photo. A huge baby head is staring out from under his kitchen loft bed as he launches into a solo performance—a disco-ball-popping, hand-puppet-shadowing, beat-boxing, drum-looping madness of a one-man show. Though this moment and his background in the New Orleans alt scene scream avant-garde, he is able to translate these radically different audio influences into his playing.

"I am drawn to street noise," he says. "Each city has its own ambient soundtrack. Cuba, from a New Orleans perspective, was particularly mind-blowing, as Cuba has a whole side of sounds in itself, especially since New Orleans isn't a quiet place. The cars in Cuba all make certain sounds—all of these cars are made before 1960. So you just aren't hearing, you are feeling the exhausts and engines that made these raw and visceral sounds. It was a cacophony of rumbling, grit that you felt in your teeth."

The Cuban experience brought Maedgen back to simpler times and also brought to light the mirror images between New Orleans and Cuba: a conga line featuring men hitting a brick with a wrench instead of drums, the grandmother watching her grandbabies in diapers play on the cobblestone street while smoking a cigarette, and people's faces looking like his neighbors' on Frenchmen Street.

"Cuba is so much more than everything here. The everyday walk of life is a soundtrack of food vendors yelling, car sounds and percussion being made from anything lying around. It was fascinating in that way, back to a more organic style of life," he says. "If someone is lucky enough to

Courtesy of APMFF (Pres Hall with Clinch and Fallon); Dean Budnick (Pres Hall with Del McCoury Band)

have an instrument there, they are playing it all day long and sleeping with it, like we did as a kid," Maedgen continues, stressing the significance of even possessing an instrument in Cuba.

"We are so blown out as a society and a culture here in America now—that experience is not the same here and will never be. Just how people went about their day and how there were a dozen people living in a house, no one on their cell phones and little kids skipping rope—inspiration everywhere."

The choice to debunk from their French Quarter barracks and hole up in El Paso, Texas to record *So It Is* set the tone for the band's personal and sonic exploration. "This is the first time we recorded outside of New Orleans," Jaffe says. "We all felt it was important we record somewhere we could reflect, be introspective and focus, as going where we've gone on this project is unchartered for us."

Sitek is known for getting artists out of their comfort zones, and pushing and stretching them to the fibers of their own capabilities, which was exactly what Jaffe was searching for. He also was the driving force behind moving the sessions outside New Orleans to the Sonic Ranch in El Paso. Jaffe describes the studio as "a magic place" that's "special in the way Preservation Hall is special." The sessions immediately clicked; tracks like single "Santiago," "La Malanga" and "One Hundred Fires" would fit snugly onstage at Coachella or Jazz Fest, both of which the band played this spring.

"Dave challenged all of us to make great music," Jaffe says. "He believes in searching to the point of mayhem. That's a scary place to go when making music that has a responsibility to its city. You want to make music your community cheers for. I love that about Bruce Springsteen—he's a hometown, New Jersey hero."

"We tried to keep in mind that vibration is everything," Sitek adds. "Allowing a listener to blast the speakers and get your whole being inside the song. Inhabiting the music—that's your chance to transform and become joy, sorrow—it's an exultation of the infinite, fearless. Let the horns inform."

The resulting album, which was released in April via Legacy, is both a fusion of the disparate African sounds that have informed the music of Cuba and New Orleans for generations and a continuation of Pres Hall's own 21st-century evolution. Jaffe and Gabriel penned the album's tracks, tapping into a blend of Afro-Cuban grooves and psychedelic-jazz experiments that share a familiar bond with the classic Crescent City sounds that their ensemble has preserved for over 50 years.

"He challenged us to be the musicians we are, and everyone in the band is at the top of their musical game," Jaffe says. "Dave knows this and he knew we could push ourselves creatively in this project."

And, despite their new recording location and more global palette of sounds, Jaffe still considers *So It Is* to be a true New Orleans statement—and one that captures one of America's cultural jewels at a unique time in the country's social and political history.

"It was important that we made a very honest record—an album that is the sign of the times," he says, summing up the band's mission since their Cuban journey two years ago. "In New Orleans, we play music and dance at our saddest moments, contrary to the way most of this country deals with sadness. The thing about New Orleans music is it doesn't just rise above. It exists above everything else."

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King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard have promised to deliver five full-length LPs this year but even if they don't quite make it, they've still got it made

BY JESSE JARNOW

JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE GIZZVERSE

IN MANHATTAN'S Webster Hall, the seven members of King Gizzard and The Lizard Wizard stand in a tight cluster in the middle of the venue's floor and stare upwards, into the flashing light. From the balcony, a photographer conducts a shoot and with each flash an image of the Australian band gets sucked into some untold future. Each captures a tiny slice of the band's big moment, when a noisy, concept-album-making double-drummer freakbeat septet from Melbourne are now filling up a 1,500-person New York City venue with crazed, rowdy fans. Soundcheck is over, and the smoke machines are working just fine. Pitchfork is arriving to set up a live webstream.

Some of the band's members are shoeless. They joke with each other, sometimes forgetting to look up at the camera. A publicist shepherds the 20-something mates around. There's a lot to do. But that seems to be the speed of life these days: fast. Formed in 2010, the band functioned more as a swarm around chief songwriter Stu Mackenzie, eventually whittling down to the seven-piece that's been touring the United States and Europe constantly for the past several years.

While King Gizzard and their stroboscopic surf-punk have earned big buzz, they've done so through the straight-ahead means of having a good hook and working very, very hard. This is hardly their American debut; they even lived outside Manhattan for a few months and gigged in the city constantly. They're perfectly capable of keeping busy without photographers or publicists.

Even though it's a rainy, blustery last day of March, fans are lined up outside of the venue waiting for the doors to open. Huddled against the cold, the excitement is as palpable as the wafting pot smoke. Spitting out 10 albums in their seven-year career, King Gizzard is the type of band built for wide-eyed obsession. It is music suited for both wild fan theories (search for "Gizzverse" on Reddit) and frothing mosh pits and crowd-surfing—a space with enough cosmic goofery that fans feel comfortable dressing in costume. (A banana outfit and knight-errant are reported the next night.)

With one album out in February (*Flying Microtonal Banana)* and another scheduled for June (*Murder of the Universe*), the Lizard Wizard is only a little bit behind in Mackenzie's promise to release a total of five full-lengths this year. There's at least one more recorded, but all their time is booked up with touring for the foreseeable future. Still, they don't seem worried. What's to worry about?

* * *

AT HOME, KING GIZZARD & THE Lizard Wizard live in a 24-by-13-foot box in the Melbourne suburb of Brunswick East. The individual members technically sleep elsewhere but, when it comes to assembling and actually *being* the Lizard Wizard, it occurs at their new studio. "A year and a half ago, we started renting a warehouse," says Mackenzie, having proceeded to the interview portion of his post-soundcheck festivities, "and we just built this box inside of it. It has a really low ceiling, which is kind of fucked up, and has fluorescent lights in it." The longhaired guitarist almost visibly shudders.

If there's a real-life Gizzverse, then it is the warehouse. Outside the soundproofed rehearsal and recording box, Lizard drummer/thereminist Eric Moore runs Flightless, the band's literal in-house label, merchandising and management operation. Also stationed there is Jason Galea, the band's artist, whose apocalyptic, mountain-strewn LP covers and live visuals provide key fodder for Reddit speculations about the connection points between the narratives of 2014's *I'm in Your Mind Fuzz* and 2016's *Nonagon Infinity.* The art collective and publishers No One Special also run a small gallery, Nowhere Special, out of the space.

Lords of their own Gizzverse: King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard

For King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard—a name built for jamband fans—the concepts started as quickly as the band did. Though founded as a loose side project for party jams, there was a framework from the start. "It wasn't necessarily the seven that we have now," says Mackenzie. "It was kind of a revolving cast of different people. [The concept] was deliberately the simplest song you could write. Preferably one chord, maybe two—if you're kind of lucky. Preferably one word, maybe a couple—and everyone sort of making as much fucking noise as you possibly can, in order that we didn't have to rehearse, ever. And if we wanted to get some random person to play with us, we could teach them the songs in, like, 11 seconds or something. So even that kind of had an idea to it." Even if that idea, as Mackenzie concedes, was "how can we make the most idiotic music possible?"

But concepts are scalable, and so is the Lizard Wizard. Though their 2013 album *Eyes Like the Sky* came with narration and a spaghetti-western plotline, most of the binding themes on magical reptilian adventures have been musical. For *Nonagon Infinity* (recorded during their New York sojourn), they painstakingly wrote and arranged an album's worth of material that segued into each other, with the last song looping back to the album's opening. Creating the album was as hard as the band has ever worked; they rehearsed obsessively so that it could be performed as one continuous suite of music.

The no-concept concept for the follow-up was to retire to the Australian countryside and play acoustic music, and the resultant *Paper Mâché Dream Balloon* is the most striking item in their discography. With band members teaching themselves new instruments, the songs are both textured and propulsive, with perhaps their most intensely detailed songcraft yet, sometimes sounding like a rural Australian equivalent of New York DIY psych-folk standard-bearers, Woods. Each new chapter introduces new dialects to a quickly expanding vocabulary.

Casually, if not quite accidentally, the band's first major release of 2017 immediately propelled them into rarified territory, and it originated with a holiday Mackenzie took in Turkey. Already a fan of Turkish artists, like Anatolian rock hero (and record-collector favorite) Erkin Koray, Mackenzie grew interested in the local traditional music.

"Being a guitarist, I was drawn to the baglama, which is a long-neck stringed instrument with movable frets, and the frets are not often in the places where we Westerners would think they might be," he says. "And you start hearing these other sounds, and it just starts to sound awesome. When I got home, I bought a baglama, and I was half-heartedly learning it, having a bash—this goes back a few years—and I started writing some songs with the baglama, and started thinking about how we're going to make this baglama record, and started thinking,: 'How is this going to work?'"

At the same time, a guitar-making friend asked Mackenzie if he had any ideas for a guitar he'd like, and Mackenzie wound up receiving the Flying Banana, a yellow guitar with a microtonal scale based on the baglama, minus the movable frets. "It was kind of just a way to find middle ground and figure out how to play this stuff with just the things that I'm used to, like loud guitar amps and drum kits and stuff. If you're sitting there cross-legged playing the baglama with a drum kit, something's not quite right, you know?"

Soon, Mackenzie realized that if he was going to play a microtonal instrument, then *everyone* besides the drummers would have to play microtonal instruments, so the band ended up with two more microtonal guitars, some harmonicas, a bass and a modified keyboard. And away they went, simultaneously arriving in a new harmonic dimension of the Gizzverse and a place with rich musical history, connecting the Lizard Wizard to instrument builder Harry Partch, psychedelic drone-master La Monte Young and countless other experimenters who use intonation experiments as keys to the cosmos. For King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard, it's all in an album's work. "I think we'll make another microtonal record at some point," Mackenzie says. "I mean, we've got the guitars to do it."

But there's other work to do first. Next out is *Murder of the Universe,* unquestionably the group's most relentlessly meta-project yet, and a return to the narrative-driven play of *Eyes Like the Sky*. "This record was always supposed to link up to other stuff that we've made," Mackenzie says, "so it felt necessary to [have narrations] to tie some things up, even if it is still somewhat vague. We just kind of wanted to expand on this sort of universe. We ended up with three very distinct chapters which, taken on their own, sort of have a beginning, middle and end, and sort of follow a story. And they are somewhat interconnected but, more or less, it's three distinct stories on this record."

If it all sounds like too much to consume—that's OK—it's still a howling pile driver of an album, even if one skips the tracks with interstitial narration and creepy cyborg voices intoning haunting poetry, the perfect medium between the overproduced garage-rock of John Dwyer's Oh Sees and the over-productive garage-prog of Matthew Friedberger's Fiery Furnaces. And if even *that* sounds like too much, there's always the next dispatch from the Gizzverse, a collaboration with Alex Brettin, the songwriter known as the Mild High Club. It features Mackenzie, Brettin and "whoever else was around, which was often quite a lot of us," says Mackenzie. "It's sort of got an exploring what-the-fuck-are-we-doing? kind of sound."

> "We go through these periods where it's ultra loose and we don't write setlists and it's called out—and things can turn into other things. That's the most enjoyable for me, but it can really go either way. I stand in the middle so I can kind of, like, point and tell everyone sort of what to do."
> **STU MACKENZIE**

Mackenzie swallows the mic at Bonnaroo in 2015.

Given the amount of musical universes he's already traversed, it seems like an imposition to even ask Mackenzie about what might come for albums four or five. Even if he doesn't have a plan yet, he operates with the faith that new galaxies and constellations will manifest accordingly.

* * *

THE CENTRAL UNIFYING substance of the Gizzverse, concept albums aside, is drums. On the stage at Webster Hall, the two drummers—Michael Cavanagh and Eric Moore—face one another. The band launches into their show with a seven-song segment drawn from *Flying Microtonal Banana*, and the moshing starts almost immediately and only intensifies. As opposed to the multi-limbed polyrhythms of the Grateful Dead or the intricate interlocking of The Feelies, Cavanagh and Moore often double each other's parts—a veritable jet stream beneath the band's whoosh.

After a break to switch back to standard intonation instruments, the septet slams into a suite of tunes from the not-yet-really-announced *Murder of the Universe,* as crowd-surfers make their way to the front barricades, deposited for the bouncers and circulated back into the crowd.

Beginning their touring year with a turn on the Australian summer festival circuit (following their own traveling Australian Gizzfest in late 2016), the band prepped for their U.S. tour by playing in-the-round for eight consecutive nights at Melbourne's Night Cat. "We go through these periods where it's ultra loose and we don't write setlists and it's called out—and things can turn into other things," he says. "That's the most enjoyable for me, but it can really go either way. I stand in the middle so I can kind of, like, point and tell everyone sort of what to do."

But New York is New York, the Lizard Wizard keeps it tight and the frenzy continues right up to the end of the show sequence of little big bangs while the onstage projections of zooming landscape grids perhaps do (or don't) link up to miscellaneous album concepts. After nearly two hours, the Lizard Wizard waves good night, the mosh pit ceases and the Gizzverse continuum temporarily dissolves—a place to go instead of worrying.

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Even as band co-founder Pete Heimbold faces his own internal struggles, Dispatch returns with a newfound commitment they haven't experienced since the turn of the millennium.

BY JEREMY D. GOODWIN

UNITED WE STAND

THERE'S A CLUBHOUSE vibe tonight at Chad Stokes Urmston's place. Enough people are in the house right now—maybe a dozen—that my arrival goes more or less unnoticed. Urmston and Dispatch bandmate Brad Corrigan are standing in the living room, eating bowls of Raisin Bran. The TV is tuned to a January playoff game between the New England Patriots and Pittsburgh Steelers.

There's a camera crew on hand for a second straight day of shooting various promotional footage, and their gear is piled up in various corners; in a few minutes, the band will also play a short set of songs off in a side room for *Relix*'s video series. One member of the band's management team is sitting on a couch talking about the history of music videos. Another is out picking up Indian takeout for everybody.

Percussion instruments and video gear are scattered everywhere on the first floor of this rambling house in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston, which Urmston and his wife own but rent out. It feels like guys' night. In the kitchen, there's a (mostly full) pizza box and a (mostly empty) box of Dunkin' Donuts treats. Someone is rolling a joint on the counter.

It's an eventful weekend for Dispatch. They're racing to get the videos done before Urmston has throat surgery in a couple of days, after which he'll be on strict doctor's orders to keep quiet for a few weeks. (That is unless his wife delivers their third child before then, which is a possibility.) They're also in the midst of signing off on final mixes for the tracks on their sixth studio album, and first in five years, *America, Location 12*. The record is due in June, around the time that Dispatch will hit the road with old friends Guster, as well as Marco Benevento. Pete Francis Heimbold, the third member of the group, is not present.

When first setting up this evening's interview, I was told that all three members of Dispatch would be there. Later, I received the update that Heimbold had to return home unexpectedly, and that I'd have to catch up with him at another time. It didn't sound like anything to worry about.

Urmston and Corrigan say that, for the first time in years, Dispatch is firmly committed to flipping the band's switch into the "on" position. The flurry of band activity on display here tonight is evidence. They seem full of optimism about the future of the group and talk about a new sense of purpose. Yet, that's not the whole story. Dispatch is back, yes, but it turns out that, for the time being, they are flying in a missing-man formation.

* * *

SMOOTH VOCAL HARMONIES have always been part of this band's sound. So it's tempting to read into the way Urmston and Corrigan sometimes answer a question in unison, their words overlapping like the dialogue in a David Mamet play. They pursue parallel points and weave in and out of each other's sentences, beginning a thought here and finishing one there.

Corrigan: We wanna work hard. We wanna release a badass record. We wanna...
Urmston: ...there's a new level of commitment...
Corrigan: ...to bring all of this...
Urmston: ...that we haven't felt since, like...
Corrigan: ...the first two records, really...
Urmston: ...the late '90s. It was like, either play less and make it a big deal that we just play every five years...
Corrigan: ...and keep it nostalgic. Oh, that sounds so awful...
Urmston: ...or be a real band.

Allen Ralph

"He's been really incredible about giving us his blessing. But it's really tough," Urmston says of Heimbold's hiatus from Dispatch. "Bands go through different phases and, in some ways, this is just a different one, but we're missing our third guy. It's a strange and sad and hard season."

Corrigan: ...and play and prove and reach and inspire. And *get after it*.

Dispatch originally coalesced as One Fell Swoop at Middlebury College in the mid-1990s, but has functioned more as an on-again, off-again proposition for longer than it was ever a full-time band grinding it out every night on the road. In the late '90s, they grew into college and prep-school favorites, thanks to their blend of rock, folk, ska and jam, and their commitment to grassroots fan engagement; with the advent of Napster in the early 2000s, they exploded into generational stars before most fans outside of the East Coast had a chance to see them and, as the inner-band dynamics quickly soured, the trio initially went on hiatus in 2002.

After brushing aside breakup rumors, Dispatch first came back together in 2004 for a warm-up club date before a massive, free farewell show at Boston's Hatch Shell that drew over 100,000 fans. They staged an equally high-profile and quick New York reunion run leading up to three sold-out nights at New York's Madison Square Garden in 2007, and came together for an acoustic engagement at Washington, D.C.'s Kennedy Center in 2009 at the request of the prime minister of Zimbabwe (the country that the MSG dates benefited). Those all shaped up as isolated projects, and Urmston, Corrigan and Heimbold returned to solo ventures and social activism.

The second era of Dispatch's career truly kicked off in 2011, when the trio officially came back together and hit the road for a series of summer dates at marquee venues like Morrison, Colo.'s Red Rocks, Berkeley, Calif.'s Greek Theatre and Boston's TD Garden. That run led into the 2012 release of their first studio album in over 10 years, *Circles Around the Sun*, and additional time on the road. But the *Circles Around the Sun* reboot proved unsatisfying for both critics and many longtime fans, and Dispatch seemed burdened by the legend of their own absence. In recent years, the group's performances have been sporadic.

"We have our core fanbase,

and that's maybe not that many, and then there's a bunch of people who kind of know the name Dispatch, and those people think we last played in 2007," Urmston says. He tells a story about running into some old friends of the band and mentioning that Dispatch was gearing up for the record that would become *America, Location 12*. They were happily surprised the band was back together.

"We wanted to make a splash with this record and really come back in a way that's..." Urmston says, trailing off.

"Noticeable?" Corrigan offers wryly.

"Where random friends know we're back together," Urmston counters.

In the past, long-simmering personality conflicts and power struggles wedged the trio apart. Urmston displayed his displeasure passively, showing up late for practice or recording sessions. By the end of the band's first era, the members felt weird getting onstage and acting like best friends. "The crowds were getting bigger," Corrgian says of their initial run. "But we were so burned out on each other and burned out on touring that it was like, 'This feels awful. This is what we wanted, and yet we're kind of manufacturing smiles to play these shows.'"

The band members are now in their 40s and spread out around the country—Urmston lives in Massachusetts, Corrigan has returned to his home state of Colorado, and Heimbold has moved home to southern Connecticut after years in New York City. They were determined not to make the same mistakes this time. After the *Circles* tour, there was a band meeting to talk about the future. They decided to make Dispatch more than just a series of occasional reunion projects and were ready to make it their priority. But for it all to work, they needed to communicate better.

"Just being honest is the most loving and respectful thing we can do for each other. It's a little daunting, like, 'Wow, so you actually would give me permission to tell you what I think? Because I don't want to overstep my bounds,'" Corrigan says of the new dynamic. They opened up decisions to include management and other collaborators, to avoid the old two-to-one votes that always left somebody feeling resentful. And they needed to get out of their own way on a creative level as well.

"Pete and I can say that Chad just stepped up massively, saying he really wanted to creatively captain this record and captain our band forward," Corrigan recalls. "It's tricky with three guys who write songs and three guys who are used to singing lead. That can be our strength, but it can also be our greatest weakness, if we don't let our natural leader lead."

With a consensus around the idea of Urmston as the creative captain, Dispatch struck a new balance. They started making plans for a European tour, scheduled for summer 2016. "We had this moment where we all were so pumped to go full-on for the first time in a long time," Urmston says.

Then Heimbold gave the other guys some news: He was sick. He couldn't tour. In fact, he needed to step away from the band indefinitely.

* * *

AS HE WOULD ANNOUNCE IN a Facebook post in March, Heimbold was suffering from depression. His condition was, and is, so serious that he wasn't up for any band business last summer or for promoting and touring the new album this year. (He did contribute to the sessions and can be heard on every song, Urmston and Corrigan each make a point to mention.)

When I met with the rest of the band in Boston, Heimbold and his family were still struggling with what to say about all of this. Neither of his bandmates, nor his management, wanted to overstep by speaking on

Another "circle around the sun" together: Urmston, Corrigan, Heimbold (l-r)

Allen Ralph

his behalf. Urmston and Corrigan talked honestly about the band's new sense of urgency, but had to leave out a key detail. The ruse about Heimbold missing our interview unexpectedly fell apart when it turned out he wasn't available for a phone call either. Something was happening, but no one would say what. Shortly before Heimbold issued his statement, Corrigan called me from the Denver airport and explained the situation: Heimbold was sick and wasn't sure what to say about it.

"Like others you may know, I battle depression. In order to get better, this problem requires my complete focus and every bit of energy I can spare," Heimbold wrote in his Facebook message. "In sharing my decision with you publicly for the first time, I feel a much needed sense of relief that will allow me to focus all of my energy on my healing... My hope is that I will also get to share with you some of my successes as I travel what may be a rocky and sometimes uncertain path toward well-being."

One rainy afternoon in April, I have a follow-up phone call with Urmston. Since our late-January meeting in Boston, he's had vocal chord surgery followed by three weeks of silence. His daughter, Charlie Bird, was born. He talks to me while he's sitting in his van, parked on the property in rural Sherborn, Mass., that is home to multiple generations of his family. His sleeping infant daughter is also in the van. He speaks softly.

When Heimbold told the rest of the band that he needed to step away to address his depression and the issues related to his illness, everybody spent a few months thinking about how to proceed, Urmston explains.

"It really came to a head, where we were like, 'We have to either cancel Europe or not,'" he says. "And slightly after that, 'Are we going to do a Dispatch record with these new tunes or not?'"

Heimbold encouraged his bandmates to move forward, and assured them that he'd return to Dispatch when he's able. (Through management, Heimbold declined invitations to be interviewed for this article, both before and after issuing his statement.)

The Europe tour went forward, complete with two additional musicians and a nightly announcement expressing Heimbold's desire to be there. For their summer tour behind *America, Location 12*, Urmston and Corrigan will be joined by John Reilly and Matthew Embree, longtime members of Urmston's other bands, and Mike Sawitzke, who engineered (and played on) the new album.

"He's been really incredible about giving us his blessing," Urmston says of Heimbold. "But it's really tough. Bands go through different phases and, in some ways, this is just a different one, but we're missing our third guy. It's a strange and sad and hard season."

* * *

AMERICA, LOCATION 12 builds on *Circles Around the Sun*'s sounds. It was recorded just north of San Francisco last fall at a house studio that looks down on Stinson Beach. My Morning Jacket, Chris Robinson Brotherhood and others have recently gravitated toward the studio's relaxed, Big Pink vibe. To hear Urmston and Corrigan describe it, it sounds like an idyllic setting. Breezy tunes like "Painted Yellow Lines" and "Only the Wild Ones" would be perfect soundtrack fodder for a California beach party. The vocal harmonies on the record are plentiful and gorgeous. Some of the songs range pleasantly into earworm territory. The ska and up-tempo reggae flavors of the band's early days are nowhere to be found, and the new songs don't groove too hard. It doesn't sound raw or hungry, but it does sound confident, and it's extremely tuneful.

Producer John Dragonetti says he and Sawitzke brought two carloads of vintage amplifiers and guitars to complement the old-school gear the studio was outfitted with. They used a vintage RCA pre-amp from the 1950s, Dragonetti's Ludwig drums, vintage Gibson guitars, some Casio synthesizers and a 1963 Hofner bass.

"We went for some early-'70s fuzzed-out sounds," Dragonetti says. "I didn't want to use contemporary distorted-guitar sounds or any of that stuff. I just felt like these songs feel older to me." He added that the studio's internet was down a lot, which helped with the sense of pleasant isolation by the beach.

The summer tour will take the band across the U.S., followed by 11 dates in Europe. Management says there may yet be an announcement of more tour dates this year. Urmston and Corrigan are not, at this point, expecting Heimbold to be able to join them.

Seated with Corrigan at his house back in January, while the video crew packs up its gear downstairs and that takeout Indian food is being eaten, Urmston says that it's important to keep the new material in heavy rotation this summer. That was the idea last time out, he says, but the band fell back into a greatest-hits set.

"If we're going to be a real band, let's have the shows be really different, let's not necessarily lean on these 10 core tunes every time we play," he explains.

Urmston and Corrigan are both a little afraid that their old fans won't entirely buy into the new record. But that's a risk that comes with growth. With new touring members on board and Heimbold's future participation unclear, there is some uncertainty. Dispatch's identity is indeed still evolving. But that's not all bad. For musicians seeking to make their old band a fully vital concern again, it's absolutely necessary.

"We are curious about what our identity is," Corrigan says. "We're always trying to figure that out."

THIS POST "LISZTOMANIA" LIFE

Phoenix steps away from the madness to create an album for themselves and, hopefully, everybody else. BY EMILY ZEMLER

Alone together: Mazzalai, Brancowitz, Mars, d'Arcy (l-r)

Emma Le Doyen / Art direction studio mitsu

THERE IS A SENSE of darkness in the world right now, but Phoenix's new album, *Ti Amo*, resonates with light. Written and recorded over the course of three years, the album contrasts with the social and political circumstances that surrounded its creation, with each song reflecting a sense of levity and joy.

"There's a Serge Gainsbourg quote that says he wrote optimistic music in sad times," singer Thomas Mars says, calling from Paris where the band has been rehearsing for their upcoming world tour. "He was talking about breakups. He said he makes joyful songs when he is heartbroken, and the opposite. So maybe it's the fact that you can create some sort of near future that you hope is coming. You force your destiny."

"We realized very early that we were doing music that was very light," guitarist Christian Mazzalai adds. "It was the idea of a fanaticized, perfect summer. It was a healer for us. Maybe it's because of the hard times of the world nowadays. Music was helping us escape a bit."

It's been over four years since Phoenix, which also includes bassist/keyboardist Deck d'Arcy and guitarist/keyboardist Laurent Brancowitz, unveiled their last album, *Bankrupt!*, on Glassnote in the spring of 2013. In many ways, that effort was a response to the critical and popular success of *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix*, the band's Grammy-winning fourth album, and its singles "1901" and "Lisztomania." *Bankrupt!* was a complex, mood-driven collection of songs, which they recorded with longtime collaborator Philippe Zdar. It spawned several hits, including "Trying to Be Cool," but there was a sense of reaction against their recent success embedded within the tracks. On *Ti Amo*, Phoenix once again worked in response to the music that came before.

"There was no vision," Mars admits. "Every time we go into the studio, it's the work of the unconscious and the chemistry between the four of us that's keeping us interested. There's never a master plan when we start over. It starts with the negative. It starts with knowing what you don't want to do, which is really hard because it can be destructive. It starts by canceling all the paths you're not interested in and then, somehow, with the unconscious and the work of our chemistry—and also with time—it comes together."

That process, he notes, is an exhausting one, even though the actual creation of the music is pleasurable for the band. "I don't recommend it," he laughs. "But it is also a very empirical process because it's something we do more as time goes on with each record."

There was little discussion going into *Ti Amo*. After finishing touring behind *Bankrupt!* in 2014, Phoenix rented a room on the top floor of the Paris theater La Gaîté Lyrique, which is notably located a short distance from the Bataclan. The theater had shows in production when the band members set up computers, wires and gear in the room, and they spent nearly every day for three years locked inside. The quartet enlisted engineer Pierrick Devin to co-produce the album with them. Initially, Phoenix had hoped to work with an outside producer and, as Mars put it, "bring someone else into the circle." But in the end, it made more sense for the four musicians to helm the sessions themselves.

"We just know what we like," Mars explains. "We are control freaks, too, so I think it gives us satisfaction to do everything ourselves. We'd rather learn and not do it the most professional way, but it has character when you do everything yourselves sometimes."

"Maybe less professional, but more true," Mazzalai agrees. "It could have sounded a bit more pro, but not in a good way. When it's too pro, it loses innocence. And on this album, innocence was the key word for us."

* * *

THE MEMBERS OF PHOENIX, who grew up together and have been working together officially as a band since 1999, prefer not to enter into an album with too many expectations. But they do have some stipulations for how they work. For instance, the musicians often elect to shut out the outside world while creating, refusing to watch TV or listen any other music. They want the process to feel genuine and essential to only the four of them. This time, though, the world felt somewhat inescapable, mostly because both Europe and the U.S. began feeling the push of conservative movements and the rise of terror threats. The attack at the Bataclan took place in 2015 while Phoenix was in the process of writing and recording *Ti Amo*. It was no longer possible for the group to ignore the atmosphere around them.

> "At some point, we had to embrace the negative aspect or the positive aspect. It was very black and white, these two records, in terms of the feel and everything."
>
> **THOMAS MARS**

"Usually, when we record, we are like hermits," Mazzalai says. "We close all the doors for months or years, and we don't watch TV. Nothing. We're kept from the outside world. But, for the first time, we were writing in the middle of Paris in this theater where people were still working, so I think it influenced us. It's a little soon for me to see how, but I would say yes." He adds, "The whole world has this crazy tension. Right in the center of Paris we could feel the tension."

That may explain the lightness on *Ti Amo*, which has a buoyancy to its songs. *Bankrupt!*'s lukewarm reception may also have contributed. For Mars, these two albums are contrasting companions, which you can hear when you listen to soaring, synth-laced numbers like "Fleur de Lys" and first single "J-Boy." The title of the album is an homage to the sort of romantic graffiti you see on the walls of Italy. There is one that reads, "io, te, 1 moto, la velocità, 1 sogno, il mio sogno, ti amo," which translates to "me, you, a motorcycle, speed, a dream, my dream, I love you." It made sense to name this collection of music after the idea of love, especially since the band almost called the last

album "Je T'Aime" at an early recording stage.

"The previous one had some negativity that I liked, but it felt like that had been expressed in *Bankrupt!*," Mars says. "At some point, we had to embrace the negative aspect or the positive aspect. It was very black and white with these two records, in terms of the feel and everything. From the sounds to the lyrics to the art to the live shows, they're strangely complementary."

Ti Amo has a purposeful sense of fantasy—or, at least, as purposeful as a band like Phoenix, who claim to channel something far more unconscious in their process, can make it. Mars knows that the band's classic songs will fit in with these new tracks live, but he isn't exactly certain of the forthcoming reaction to the album itself. It sounds resolutely like Phoenix, but the airy lightness means that these songs don't hit as hard as some of their previous numbers. The hooks are gentler and it's more of a summertime record than anything they've made in the past.

"When you see a band play live, suddenly, everything makes sense and you see where all their songs come from and how it works," Mars reflects. "An album is more intricate. It's its own thing, which is good because it's a new version of you. When we started making the album, I felt like I was bored with myself personally. I was bored with my voice. I was bored with my ideas. I had to create some sort of fanaticized version of myself with music."

Both "J-Boy" and "Fior Di Latte," a charming, mid-tempo pop number, reflect this idea. The latter, with its Mediterranean beats and dulcet melody, has a real romantic sensibility to it. For Mars, there's also an element of sci-fi in the song. "It's something I always wanted to achieve," he says. "It has some sort of uniqueness and singularity to the song, to the lyrics, to the world it creates. It has a strange mix of English and Italian, but with a French brain. That's what I like the most—when it's a singular thing."

"If you try to please people, you're artistically dead," Mazzalai says of Phoenix's creative process. "That's what we think."

At this point—six albums in and with nearly two decades behind them—the members of Phoenix still force themselves outside the box. The musicians don't want to find a formula or follow a pattern. They took so much time on *Ti Amo* because they wanted to get it right. Ultimately, Phoenix pulled the 10 songs from thousands of hours of music they'd created over three years. They wanted to ensure that anything that could become a strong song had time to develop and that they had enough space on each track to reflect on it with some perspective.

"That's a tough question because that's what we are trying to avoid when we write," Mazzalai says thoughtfully when asked to describe what constitutes a Phoenix song. "But what you can't avoid is the four of us." He pauses, realizing there might be something that unifies the band's entire discography. "Maybe," he says, "especially on this album, the emotions are always mixed. You start to think they are happy songs, but there's always a little melancholy behind the chords. It's bittersweet. I think it's the best emotion. When you're between pure sadness and pure happiness, you know? When you confront these two feelings, there's a complexity that is there. It's a never-ending emotion for me and, I think, for all human beings."

> "Usually, when we record, we are like hermits. We close all the doors for months or years, and we don't watch TV."
> CHRISTIAN MAZZALAI

Both Mars and Mazzalai (who mentions early on in the conversation that this is his first interview for the new album) feel that they can't know yet exactly what *Ti Amo* is. They know it feels lighter and that making it felt like a healing process for them. They know it sounds unlike anything they've done in the past. But they aren't totally sure what it all means. "For us, it takes time to realize what we've done," Mars says. "When the record is done, it's only halfway into the middle of the tour that I realize what we wanted to express. It's such an unconscious process. It's almost like a psychoanalysis. It takes that playing for people and the record being out to realize it."

That tour, which will have launched by the time this article runs, will mark Phoenix's first time on the road in several years. The band didn't play a live show while making *Ti Amo*, and the only thing they did outside the studio was collaborate on the soundtrack to *The Beguiled,* the new film by Mars' wife Sofia Coppola. At the time of this interview, in late April, the musicians are itching to get back on the road. Phoenix didn't think at all about the live show while writing *Ti Amo*, so now they are working on the best way to present the music onstage. That will hopefully involve an elaborate visual experience, which the musicians are designing themselves.

"We're too ambitious at this level," Mars says. "We may have to tame it down. You will know by the time this runs if we failed miserably or if we did it. But we have a vision for the live show." He laughs, adding, "I'm pretty certain it will happen, but I may regret saying that."

"We want it to be special," Mazzalai notes. "We hope it's going to be very unique. We wanted to stay as pure as possible while recording. We don't want to restrict anything. There's this danger if you think about the live show. So we're putting it all together now that the album is done."

The musicians may admit to some nerves about the forthcoming response to the album and its accompanying concerts but, ultimately, they aren't making music to please other people. They wrote *Ti Amo* because they felt a tension in the air and wanted to create a force for healing. They wrote it because they wanted to try something new after making *Bankrupt!* They wrote it because the four of them went into a room, began to play and something arrived, mostly unconsciously and unexpectedly. *Ti Amo* may ease your own sense of the darkness, too, but that's not necessarily the point.

"It's for us," Mazzalai says. "When we do music, it's a very selfish process at the beginning. If you try to please people, you're artistically dead. That's what we think. Maybe the album will be healing for other people, but we'll never know."

Emma Le Doyen / Art direction studio mitsu

Electric Forest

THE 17TH ANNUAL RELIX FESTIVAL GUIDE SETIII

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SUMMER OF LOVE IS UPON US AND THAT MEANS THAT THE MODERN FESTIVAL WORLD IS ALSO celebrating its golden jubilee. While outdoor multi-band gatherings had been hallmarks of the jazz and folk scenes for years, it wasn't until Monterey Pop brought together Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, Jimi Hendrix Experience, The Who, Big Brother and the Holding Company, The Mamas & the Papas, Otis Redding and many others in 1967 that the rock-and-roll festival era was officially born. Now, summer festivals are not only a rite of passage for music fans looking to capture a whiff of that Summer of Love spirit, but they are also the ultimate showcase for both new and legendary bands looking to connect with today's wide-eared audiences. *Relix* has profiled the scene's turns and changes during the past 15-plus years and we are once again proud to offer a comprehensive look at the perpetual Summer of Festival Love. Our "third set" coincides with summer's unofficial Memorial Day kickoff and stretches all the way through Labor Day. We'll continue to preview the best of this year's fests and destination events throughout our 2017 issues and online at www.relix.com/festivals.

Lineups are up-to-date as of press time. If you see an (R) next to a listing, then be sure to visit us at the *Relix* booth onsite.

Rocklahoma
5/26-28 // Pryor, OK
Def Leppard, Soundgarden, The Offspring, Stone Sour, Seether, Three Days Grace, The Cult, Pierce the Veil, The Pretty Reckless, more rocklahoma.com

Summer Camp R
5/26-28 // Chillicothe, IL
Umphrey's McGee, moe., Trey Anastasio Band, Pretty Lights Live, Zeds Dead, Primus, Gov't Mule, Run the Jewels, The Disco Biscuits, Gramatik, Mike Gordon, The Claypool Lennon Delirium, EOTO, Yonder Mountain String Band, Railroad Earth, The Wood Brothers, more summercampfestival.com

We Are FSTVL
5/26-28 // Upminster, United Kingdom
Craig David Presents TS5, Carl Cox, Dizzee Rascal, Basement Jaxx, Kink, Ricardo Villalobos, more wearefstvl.com

River City Rockfest
5/27 // San Antonio, TX
Def Leppard, Godsmack, The Offspring, Papa Roach, Three Days Grace, The Pretty Reckless, Taking Back Sunday, Rival Sons, Buckcherry, more rivercityrockfest.com

BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend
5/27-28 // Hull, United Kingdom
Kings of Leon, alt-J, Lorde, Imagine Dragons, Katy Perry, HAIM, Lana Del Rey, The Chainsmokers, Two Door Cinema Club, more bbc.co.uk/events

Love Saves the Day
5/27-28 // Bristol, United Kingdom
Little Dragon, Mura Masa, Fat Freddy's Drop, Nao, Kate Tempest, Kano, BADBADNOTGOOD, Crazy P, Jamie Jones, Shy FX, more lovesavestheday.org

Neon Desert
5/27-28 // El Paso, TX
Hardwell, Foster the People, J Balvin, Alesso, Logic, Ghostland Observatory, Nelly, Ty Segall, more neondesertmusicfestival.com

Sunset
5/27-28 // Tampa, FL
Major Lazer, Above & Beyond, Zeds Dead, RL Grime, Louis the Child, Dusky, SNAILS, Ghastly, more smftampa.com

Soundset
5/28 // St. Paul, MN
Travis Scott, Atmosphere, Ms. Lauryn Hill, Gucci Mane, T.I., Mac Miller, Kevin Gates, Pusha T, Brother Ali, more soundsetfestival.com

Mountain Music
6/1-3 // Minden, WV
Umphrey's McGee, The Revivalists,

Summer Camp

Twiddle, Karl Denson's Tiny Universe, The Main Squeeze, Big Something, more mountainmusicfestwv.com

Nelsonville Music
6/1-4 // Nelsonville, OH
Ween, Emmylou Harris, Conor Oberst, Jenny Lewis, Rodriguez, Son Volt, Parquet Courts, Sara Watkins, Big Thief, Margaret Glaspy, more nelsonvillefest.org

Candler Park Music & Food
6/2-3 // Atlanta, GA
Joe Russo's Almost Dead, Lake Street Dive, Railroad Earth, Matisyahu, The Motet, Pigeons Playing Ping Pong, The Marcus King Band, Ripe, Chelsea Shag, Webster, more candlerparkmusicfestival.com

Orange Warsaw
6/2-3 // Warsaw, Poland
Kings of Leon, Imagine Dragons, Martin Garrix, Justice, Kodaline, Years & Years, more orangewarsawfestival.pl/en

Bunbury
6/2-4 // Cincinnati, OH
Muse, Thirty Seconds to Mars, Pretty Lights, Death Cab for Cutie, The Shins, Wiz Khalifa, G-Eazy, The 1975, Flogging Molly, more bunburyfestival.com

Colossal Clusterfest
6/2-4 // San Francisco, CA
Jerry Seinfeld, Kevin Hart, Bill Burr, Sarah Silverman, Ice Cube, Tegan and Sara, Chromeo, Preservation Hall Jazz Band, Princess featuring Maya Rudolph and Gretchen Lieberum, Ty Segal, Superjam featuring Les Claypool's Bastard Jazz more clusterfest.com

Governors Ball
6/2-4 // New York, NY
Tool, Chance the Rapper, Lorde, Phoenix, Flume, Beach House, Childish Gambino, Wu-Tang Clan, The Head and the Heart, Cage the Elephant, Mac DeMarco, Phantogram, more governorsballmusicfestival.com

Michael Arnone's Crawfish Fest R
6/2-4 // Augusta, NJ
The Fabulous Thunderbirds featuring Kim Wilson, Anders Osborne, Tab Benoit, Rebirth Brass Band, Terrance Simien & The Zydeco Experience, Charles Neville, John Papa Gros Band, Little Freddie King, The New Stew featuring Corey Glover & Roosevelt Collier, more crawfishfest.com

Ogden Music
6/2-4 // Ogden, UT
Hot Rize, Sarah Jarosz, Parker Millsap, Tim O'Brien, Frank Solivan & Dirty Kitchen, Bryon Sutton Band, Amy LaVere, The Hollering Pines, more ofoam.org

Purple Hatter's Ball
6/2-4 // Live Oak, FL
Emancipator, Dumpstaphunk, Perpetual Groove, Zach Deputy, Zoogma, Roosevelt Collier Band, The Russ Liquid Test, DubConscious, more purplehattersball.com

Riverfest
6/2-4 // Little Rock, AR
Wiz Khalifa, Justin Moore, Cage the Elephant, Billy Currington, Grouplove, Cold War Kids, Moon Taxi, Cody Jinks, Jon Bellion, more riverfestarkansas.com

Rock am Ring / Rock im Park
6/2-4 // Mendig, Germany/ Nuremberg, Germany
Prophets of Rage, Liam Gallagher, Simple Plan, Clutch, System of a Down, Sum 41, SHVPES, Rammstein, Pierce the Veil, Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, Machine Gun Kelly, more rock-am-ring.com

World Club Dome
6/2-4 // Frankfurt, Germany
deadmau5, Afrojack, Waka Flocka Flame, Hardwell, Zedd, marshmello, Steve Aoki, EDX, Luciano, Solomun, more worldclubdome.com

Wychwood
6/2-4 // Cheltenham, United Kingdom
Buzzcocks, Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark, The Levellers, Billy Bragg, The Strypes, Indigo Rose, Let's Eat Grandma, more wychwoodfestival.com

Rock in Vienna
6/2-5 // Vienna, Austria
Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, Kings of Leon, House of Pain, Clutch, Beatsteaks, Appletree, In Extremo, The Living End, more rockinvienna.at

Spring Break Island
6/2-5 // Novalja, Croatia
TUJAMO, Plastik Funk, Jan Leyk, Simon & Phil, Chris Willsman, Alexis, Dodobeatz, Fortunate & Patrice, Gaarden & Coots, more springbreak-island.com

Three Rivers Arts
6/2-11 // Pittsburgh, PA
Rebirth Brass Band, Hippo Campus, Michael Kiwanuka, Sean Rowe, Birds of Chicago, Dawes, Fruition, Sarah Jarosz, St. Paul & The Broken Bones, more traf.trustarts.org

Cold Mountain Music at Lake Logan
6/3 // Canton, NC
Steep Canyon Rangers, Love Canon, Balsam Range, Town Mountain, Billy Strings, more coldmountainmusic.org

Field Day
6/3 // London, United Kingdom
Flying Lotus, Aphex Twin, Run the Jewels, King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard, Nicolas Jaar, Kevin Morby, Thee Oh Sees, Whitney, Sinkane, more fielddayfestivals.com

Rockfest
6/3 // Kansas City, KS
Godsmack, Sammy Hagar, Volbeat, Halestorm, Collective Soul, Blackberry Smoke, P.O.D., Buckcherry, more rockfestkc.com

Roots Picnic
6/3 // Philadelphia, PA
The Roots, Pharrell, Lil Wayne, Solange, 21 Savage, Kimbra, Thundercat, Michael Kiwanuka, Pete Rock, more rootspicnic.com/philly

Field Trip
6/3-4 // Toronto, Canada
Broken Social Scene, Phoenix, A Tribe Called Red, Feist, Portugal. The Man, BADBADNOTGOOD, The Pharcyde, Cloud Nothings, Thundercat, James Vincent McMorrow, more fieldtriplife.com

Keith Griner

Free Press Summer Fest
6/3-4 // Houston, TX
Lorde, Flume, Cage the Elephant, Solange, Tove Lo, The Shins, G-Eazy, Portugal. The Man, St. Paul & The Broken Bones, Frightened Rabbit, more
fpsf.com

Imaginarium
6/3-4 // Margny-les-Compiegne, France
Naive New Beaters, Thylacine, Deluxe, Jacques, Jahneration, Charlotte de Witte, Isaac Delusion, Louisahhh, more
imaginariumfestival.com

The Untz
6/3-4 // Mariposa, CA
Space Jesus, Liquid Stranger, Yheti, Truth, Eprom, Shlump, Conrank, Levitation Jones, Tsuruda, Joyzu, more
theuntzfestival.com

Bulmers Forbidden Fruit
6/3-5 // Dublin, Ireland
Bon Iver, Aphex Twin, Flying Lotus, Nicolas Jaar, Orbital, Tycho, Lisa Hannigan, Danny Brown, Booka Shade, The Staves, William Tyler, more forbiddenfruit.ie

Pinkpop
6/3-5 // Landgraaf, Netherlands
Kings of Leon, Justin Bieber, Green Day, Imagine Dragons, System of a Down, Passenger, Sum 41, Kaiser Chiefs, Five Finger Death Punch, more pinkpop.nl/2017

Sweden Rock
6/7-10 // Sölvesborg, Sweden
Aerosmith, Scorpions, Primus, In Flames, Running Wild, Alter Bridge, Kansas, Little Steven & The Disciples of Soul, more
swedenrock.com

Northside
6/7-11 // Brooklyn, NY
Dirty Projectors, Miguel, Kamasi Washington, Thursday, Elvis Depressedly, Craig Leon & Martin Rev, Downtown Boys, Field Agent, The Explosion, more
northsidefestival.com

Blue Ox
6/8-10 // Eau Claire, WI
Punch Brothers, Greensky Bluegrass, Railroad Earth, Drive-By Truckers, Sam Bush Band, The Infamous Stringdusters, Keller & The Keels, Jeff Austin Band, The Travelin' McCourys, more
blueoxmusicfestival.com

Greenfield
6/8-10 // Interlaken, Switzerland
Green Day, Blink-182, In Flames, Five Finger Death Punch, A Day to Remember, Gogol Bordello, Sum 41, Of Mice & Men, Against Me!, more
greenfieldfestival.ch/en

NOS Primavera Sound
6/8-10 // Porto, Portugal
Run the Jewels, Aphex Twin, Bon Iver, Flying Lotus, Miguel, Grandaddy, Nikki Lane, Tycho, Whitney, The Black Angels, more
nosprimaverasound.com

Bonnaroo R
6/8-11 // Manchester, TN
U2, Red Hot Chili Peppers, The Weeknd, Chance the Rapper, Lorde, The xx, Umphrey's McGee, Cage the Elephant, Big & Rich, Portugal. The Man, more bonnaroo.com

Carolina Country Music Fest
6/8-11 // Myrtle Beach, SC
Kenny Chesney, Brett Young, Jason Aldean, Darius Rucker, Gretchen Wilson, Big & Rich, Runaway June, Chris Young, more
carolinacountrymusicfest.com

Disc Jam
6/8-11 // Stephentown, NY
Break Science Live Band, Dopapod, Turkuaz, The Motet, TAUK, Kung Fu, Consider the Source, Pink Talking Fish, Electric Beethoven, more
discjammusicfestival.com

Isle of Wight
6/8-11 // Isle of Wight, United Kingdom
David Guetta, Run DMC, Arcade Fire, Rod Stewart, Kaiser Chiefs, The Pretenders, Catfish & The Bottlemen, Bastille, George Ezra, more
isleofwightfestival.com

Summerburst
6/9-10 // Stockholm, Sweden
David Guetta, deadmau5, Justin Bieber, Mike Perry, Axwell & Ingrosso, Steve Aoki, Digital Farm Animals, Curbi, more
summerburst.se/stockholm

Download
6/9-11 // Leicestershire, United Kingdom
Aerosmith, Prophets of Rage, System of a Down, Five Finger Death Punch, Mastodon, Alter Bridge, Coheed & Cambria, Rob Zombie, Slayer, Clutch, more
downloadfestival.co.uk

SUMMER SPOTLIGHT

SHOOK TWINS

BY LARSON SUTTON

Before they were Shook Twins, a traveling indie-folk twosome out of Portland, Ore., they were the Shook twins—Laurie and Katelyn—a pair of flaxen-haired singers from the upper reaches of the Idaho panhandle. "It was magical. We lived in a bubble," says Laurie Shook of those idyllic years growing up in small-town Sandpoint. "That was before hearts were broken and loved ones died."

As 3 year olds, Laurie recalls, she and her sister discovered singing—George Harrison's cover of Rudy Clark's "Got My Mind Set on You" set them in motion. In middle school, the identical siblings couldn't wait to join the choir; they did just that in both high school and at the University of Idaho. "We loved singing with a big group of people," she says, "learning how to blend voices."

It was in college that the two began writing their own songs. They performed as a duo in coffee shops and, after graduating with their respective degrees in communications, the twins returned home to live in their parents' backhouse. "We never really got a real job," Laurie says. "We just kept doing the music thing."

The scene in northern Idaho was populated with incredible talent, Laurie attests, but few national acts had emerged from the Gem State. "Built to Spill is from southern Idaho," she says. "We're the only ones from the north, maybe."

After a self-released debut, 2008's *You Can Have the Rest*, the two moved to Portland. They quickly acclimated to the vibrant local music community. In 2011, they followed up their first release with *Window*, featuring guests Bonnie Paine and Bridget Law of Elephant Revival. Then, in 2014, they issued their third record, *What We Do*.

"Our first record definitely does have Idaho in it," says Laurie. "When we moved to Portland, our style became more indie. We added eerier tones—a little bit darker, and not as easygoing."

In bands with siblings, tales of tension, rivalry and dissent come with the territory. But Laurie says that's never been an issue. The sisters' bond is so strong that they once turned down an offer to audition for *American Idol* when the producers asked that they perform individually. "We're great partners. We have this inherent need to always be balanced in everything. We each take 50 percent of the work."

The group has been enlisted as an opening act by national artists such as Greensky Bluegrass and The Wood Brothers. Shook Twins have also become familiar faces on the festival circuit, sometimes expanding to a trio or quartet, appearing every summer at the highly regarded Northwest String Summit. The bigger outdoor stages they have found themselves playing means more exposure, for sure, and less of what had become the bane of their existence.

"A loud-talking bar," Laurie says. "I want to cry."

She's identified a culprit, namely the omnipresent cellphone.

"We always have this screen, this fourth wall dividing us," Laurie says. "Maybe the audience forgets where they are. They forget there is an artist up there doing their art, playing songs they wrote. It's really painful sometimes."

The two make sure they always travel with the sense of humor that was instilled in them when they were young.

"There's a strong pull not to take ourselves too seriously," Laurie says. "It's so much more fun to have fun."

As songwriters, Shook Twins work both alone and together. Laurie confesses, though, that they are not always incredibly productive. Lately, they have engaged in creative sessions at an Airbnb, setting up their equipment in the living room. They wait for the songs to fall out of the sky, hoping to add four or five new entries into their repertoire.

"We're not the most prolific writers," Laurie says. "Finally, it'll be like, 'I'm a musician. I need to write a song.'"

There is a fourth album due for release in the coming months. Now in final mixing, Laurie admits they are fighting the terrifying feeling of "the foreverness of the songs." They'll shop it to prospective labels, hoping to have it out by September.

With a lot to look forward to, there is one date already blinking on the calendar: the group's first appearance at FloydFest in July, an event they have been eyeing for many summers. For the twins, festivals offer more than just opportunities to appear onstage. Laurie calls them family reunions—crossing paths with many artists, such as Sam Bush or Leftover Salmon, who have become friends.

"We get booked at a lot at bluegrass festivals, and we're not bluegrass at all," she says. "We're unique [in that setting], and we stand out a lot."

There will even be time at Northwest String Summit for the ladies to revive their offshoot project, Sideboob—an all-female supergroup that performs covers of '90s-pop hits—featuring the twins with Allie Kral (Yonder Mountain String Band), Mimi Naja (Fruition) and Kat Fountain.

"What's the point of putting so much pressure on yourself? It makes everything that much harder," says Laurie. "For us, music isn't about that. It's about fun. It's great to be comfortable in our own skin."

Larson Sutton

You can catch Shook Twins at Bluegrass in The Bottoms, Summer Camp, Northwest String Summit, FloydFest, Summer Meltdown, Hoxeyville and elsewhere.

NorthSide
6/9-11 // Aarhus, Denmark
Radiohead, Frank Ocean, Primus, Run the Jewels, James Blake, The Prodigy, Bastille, Richard Ashcroft, The 1975, more northside.dk

Palisade Bluegrass and Roots
6/9-11 // Palisade, CO
The Travelin' McCourys, Jeff Austin Band, Keller & The Keels, Dustbowl Revival, The Lil' Smokies, The Sweet Lilies, The Lonesome Days, more palisademusic.com

Punk Rock Bowling & Music
6/9-11 // Asbury Park, NJ
The Specials, NOFX, Charles Bradley & His Extraordinaires, Buzzcocks, Dillinger Four, Lifetime, The Explosion, Leftover Crack, PUP, The Pietasters, more punkrockbowling.com/pages/asbury-park-nj

Taste of Country
6/9-11 // Hunter, NY
Jason Aldean, Miranda Lambert, Kip Moore, Sam Hunt, Tyler Farr, Cody Johnson, Chris Young, Maren Morris, more tasteofcountryfestival.com

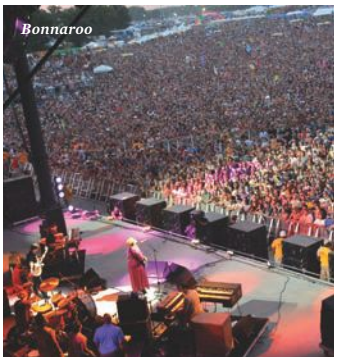
Buckeye Country Superfest
6/10-11 // Columbus, OH
Zac Brown Band, Kenny Chesney, Keith Urban, Miranda Lambert, Kip Moore, Billy Currington, Jana Kramer, more buckeyecountrysuperfest.com

LaureLive
6/10-11 // Novelty, OH
Gary Clark Jr., Young the Giant, The Head and the Heart, Michael Franti & Spearhead, St. Paul & The Broken Bones, Dawes, The Revivalists, more laurelive.com

Playboy Jazz
6/10-11 // Los Angeles, CA
Gregory Porter, Common, HUDSON with Jack DeJohnette, Larry Grenadier, John Medeski, John Scofield, Corinne Bailey Rae, TajMo': The Taj Mahal and Keb' Mo' Band, Jacob Collier, more hollywoodbowl.com/playboy-jazz-festival-2017

We Love Green
6/10-11 // Paris, France
A Tribe Called Quest, Nicolas Jaar, Solange, Anderson .Paak & The Free Nationals, Action Bronson, Flying Lotus, more welovegreen.fr/en

Bergenfest
6/14-17 // Bergen, Norway
Liam Gallagher, Richard Ashcroft, Ellie Goulding, Passenger, Slaves, Tom Odell, Tove Lo, Whitney, Nikki Lane, more bergenfest.no/english



Nova Rock
6/14-17 // Nickelsdorf, Austria
Linkin Park, Green Day, Blink-182, System of a Down, Five Finger Death Punch, Prophets of Rage, Slayer, Fatboy Slim, Good Charlotte, more novarock.at

Sónar
6/15-17 // Barcelona, Spain
Cashmere Cat, Little Dragon, Thundercat, Nicolas Jaar, Roosevelt, Moderat, Justice, Ghostly Enemies, De La Soul, Aethereal Arthropod, more sonar.es

4 Peaks
6/15-18 // Bend, OR
moe., Railroad Earth, The Infamous Stringdusters, Karl Denson's Tiny Universe, Poor Man's Whiskey, Moonalice, David Luning, more 4peaksmusic.com

Firefly
6/15-18 // Dover, DE
Bob Dylan, Chance the Rapper, The Weeknd, Flume, Weezer, Muse, The Shins, Thirty Seconds to Mars, Franz Ferdinand, Glass Animals, more fireflyfestival.com

I-Days
6/15-18 // Milan, Italy
Radiohead, Green Day, Linkin Park, Justin Bieber, Rancid, Blink-182, James Blake, Sum 41, more idays.it/en

Mad Tea Party Jam
6/15-18 // Artemas, PA
Papadosio, TAUK, Spafford, BIG Something, Aqueous, Electric Love Machine, The Fritz, Earphorik, more themadteapartyjam.com

Secret Solstice
6/15-18 // Reykjavik, Iceland
Foo Fighters, The Prodigy, Richard Ashcroft, Chaka Khan, Anderson .Paak & The Free Nationals, Rhye, Unknown Mortal Orchestra, Dusky, more secretsolstice.is

Sonic Bloom
6/15-18 // Spanish Peaks Country, CO
Gigantic Cheese Biscuits, The Polish Ambassador, The Floozies, Minnesota, Space Jesus, Random Rab, TAUK, more sonicbloomfestival.com

Telluride Bluegrass
6/15-18 // Telluride, CO
Bela Fleck & Chris Thile, Greensky Bluegrass, Norah Jones, Yonder Mountain String Band, Punch Brothers, Elephant Revival, Dispatch, Hot Rize, Jerry Douglas Band, more bluegrass.com/telluride

Eaux Claires
6/16-17 // Eau Claire, WI
Bon Iver Presents John Prine and the American Songbook, Wilco, Paul Simon with yMusic, Chance the Rapper, Big Red Machine, Tweedy, more eauxclaires.com

Best Kept Secret
6/16-18 // Hilvarenbeek, Netherlands
Radiohead, Arcade Fire, Run the Jewels, James Blake, King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard, Thundercat, George Ezra, Cass McCombs, more bestkeptsecret.nl/en

Country Summer
6/16-18 // Santa Rosa, CA
Michael Ray, Maddie & Tae, Thomas Rhett, Darius Rucker, Montgomery Gentry, A Thousand Horses, Justin Moore, Randy Houser, more countrysummer.com

Electric Daisy Carnival
6/16-18 // Las Vegas, NV
DJ Khaled, Kygo, Above & Beyond, Alesso, Axwell ^ Ingrosso, Flux Pavilion, Flosstradamus, Marshmello, Porter Robinson, Griz, Afrojack, Armin Van Buuren, Galantis, Major Lazer, Zedd, RL Grime, Dillion Francis, more lasvegas.electricdaisycarnival.com

Graspop Metal Meeting
6/16-18 // Dessel, Belgium
Deep Purple, Rammstein, Scorpions, In Flames, Alter Bridge, Five Finger Death Punch, Mastodon, Primus, more graspop.be/en

Hellfest
6/16-18 // Clisson, France
Deep Purple, Aerosmith, Linkin Park, Prophets of Rage, Rob Zombie, Five Finger Death Punch, A Day to Remember, Primus, Slayer, Alter Bridge, Suicidal Tendencies, more hellfest.fr

Monterey International Pop
6/16-18 // Monterey, CA
Jack Johnson, Phil Lesh & The Terrapin Family Band, Norah Jones, The Head and the Heart, Father John Misty, Gary Clark Jr., Jim James, Kurt Vile & The Violators, Leon Bridges, more montereypopfestival50.com

Mountain Jam R
6/16-18 // Hunter, NY
Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers, Steve Miller Band, The String Cheese Incident, Peter Frampton, Gary Clark Jr., Matisyahu, White Denim, Elephant Revival, Moon Hooch, more mountainjam.com

Sierra Nevada World Music
6/16-18 // Boonville, CA
Gentleman, Chronixx, Capleton, Barrington Levy, Tarrus Riley, Third World, Anthony B, Mellow Mood, Horace Andy, more snwmf.com

Taste of Randolph Street
6/16-18 // Chicago, IL
Dawes, Eden, Emancipator Ensemble, Here Come the Mummies, Moon Taxi, Robert DeLong, Slow Magic, !!!, Son Little, Jerry Folk, more starevents.com/event/taste-of-randolph

What the Festival
6/16-19 // Dufur, OR
Ott, Fort Knox Five, Hoodboi, Ozzie, Paper Diamond, Rezz, Zhu, Cut Copy, Gramatik, Falcons, Barclay Crenshaw, Chet Porter, more whatthefestival.com

ZIONTIFIC Summer Solstice
6/16-19 // Woodford, VT
Sophistifunk, Dub Apocalypse, Roots of a Rebellion, The Alchemystics, Bujak Live, Sensamotion, Oogee Wawa, more www.ziontificproductions.com

Clearwater's Great Hudson River Revival
6/17-18 // Croton-on-Hudson, NY
Lake Street Drive, Arlo Guthrie, Josh Ritter, Richard Thompson, Los Lobos, Joan Osborne, Alejandro Escovedo, The Barr Brothers, more clearwaterfestival.org

INmusic
6/19-21 // Zagreb, Croatia
alt-J, Arcade Fire, Kings of Leon, Flogging Molly, Kasabian, Michael Kiwanuka, Slaves, Public Service Broadcasting, more inmusicfestival.com/en

ROMP
6/21-24 // Owensboro, KY
Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Punch Brothers, Los Lobos, Keller Williams' Grateful Grass, Yonder Mountain String Band, Rhiannon Giddens, The Steeldrivers, Jerry Douglas Band, Peter Rowan Band, more rompfest.com

Glastonbury
6/21-25 // Pilton, United Kingdom
Radiohead, Foo Fighters, Kris Kristofferson, Ed Sheeran, The xx, The National, Katy Perry, Barry Gibb, Royal Blood, Run the Jewels, Lorde, Solange, more glastonburyfestivals.co.uk

Dean Budnick

Sled Island
6/21-25 // Calgary, Canada
Flying Lotus, Cloud Nothings, Waxahatchee, Low, Weyes Blood, American Lips, Mothers, New Fries, Silver Apples, Thor & Friends, more
sledisland.com

Download Madrid
6/22-24 // Madrid, Spain
Prophets of Rage, Linkin Park, System of a Down, Five Finger Death Punch, A Day to Remember, NOFX, Deafheaven, Suicidal Tendencies, Mastodon, more
downloadfestival.es/es

Shadefest
6/22-24 // Avenue, MD
Perpetual Groove, People's Blues of Richmond, LITZ, Electric Love Machine, Broccoli Samurai, Tropidelic, Teddy Midnight, Formula 5, more
shadefest.com

Tinderbox
6/22-24 // Odense, Denmark
Die Antwoord, Tove Lo, Kings of Leon, Jimmy Eat World, HAIM, RL Grime, Pet Shop Boys, The Killers, Gogol Bordello, Afrojack, more
tinderbox.dk/en

Beanstalk Music & Mountain
6/22-25 // Bond, CO
Tom Hamilton's American Babies with Aron Magner, Holly Bowling, The Magic Beans, Fruition, Cory Henry & The Funk Apostles, Reed Mathis & Electric Beethoven, Kitchen Dwellers, more
beanstalkfestival.com

Country Fest
6/22-25 // Cadott, WI
Blake Shelton, Eric Church, Thomas Rhett, Alabama, Chris Young, Brothers Osborne, Jamey Johnson, The Oak Ridge Boys, Brandy Clark, Runaway June, more
countryfest.com

Montebello Rockfest
6/22-25 // Montebello, Canada
Rammstein, Queens of the Stone Age, Iggy Pop, The Offspring, Wu-Tang Clan, At the Drive-In, Bad Religion, Megadeth, Bullet for my Valentine, AFI, Bad Religion, more
montebellorockfest.com/en

Electric Forest
6/22-25 & 6/28-7/2 // Rothbury, MI
The String Cheese Incident, Bassnectar, Odesza, M
y Morning Jacket, Above & Beyond, Dillon Francis, Big Gigantic, Dillon Francis, Lotus, Thievery Corporation, A-Trak, Big Wild, Tycho, Matisyahu, Lettuce, The London Souls, Flume, DJ Snake, White Night, The Motet, more
electricforestfestival.com

Solid Sound

Azkena Rock
6/23-24 // Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain
John Fogerty, Cheap Trick, The Hellacopters, Chris Isaak, The Cult, Michael Kiwanuka, The Godfathers, The Shelters, more
azkenarockfestival.com/en-us

Paradiso
6/23-24 // George, WA
Zeds Dead, Flux Pavilion B2B Doctor P, Sub Focus, Tiesto, Space Jesus, GRiZ, Alan Walker, Anna Lunoe, Baauer, more paradisofestival.com

Body & Soul
6/23-25 // Westmeath, Ireland
Metronomy, Vitalic, Songhoy Blues, Hundred Waters, Lambchop, Sinkane, A Tribe Called Red, Avalon Emerson, Formation, more
bodyandsoul.ie

Bonanza Campout
6/23-25 // Heber, UT
Odesza, Nick Murphy (Chet Faker), Ms. Lauryn Hill, Nas, Cut Copy, Wale, Cherub, Mutemath, Method Man & Redman, Jai Wolf, more
bonanzacampout.com

Down the Rabbit Hole
6/23-25 // Beuningen, Netherlands
Fleet Foxes, Cage the Elephant, Spoon, Bonobo, Warpaint, Father John Misty, Nicolas Jaar, Moderat, De La Soul, more
downtherabbithole.nl

Funhouse Fest
6/23-25 // Williamsburg, VA
Bruce Hornsby & The Noisemakers, Sheryl Crow, Rhiannon Giddens, Lake Street Dive, The Staves, Hiss Golden Messenger, more
funhousefest.com

Hurricane
6/23-25 // Scheeßel, Germany
Green Day, Linkin Park, Casper, Blink-182, Die Antwoord, Imagine Dragons, alt-J, A Day to Remember, Mando Diao, more hurricane.de/en

Madsummer Meltdown
6/23-25 // Schuylkill Haven, PA
Kung Fu, Pimps of Joytime, Marbin, Strung Like a Horse, EMEFE, Brothers Gow, Dirty Streets, Genetics, Urban Soil, more
jibberjazz.com/msm8

Solid Sound
6/23-25 // North Adams, MA
Wilco, Television, Andy Shauf, Kurt Vile & The Violators, Big Thief, Kevin Morby, Dave Alvin & Phil Alvin with The Guilty Ones, Tweedy, more
solidsoundfestival.com

Southside
6/23-25 // Neuhausen, Germany
Green Day, Linkin Park, Casper, Blink-182, Die Antwoord, Imagine Dragons, alt-J, Flogging Molly, Rancid, Gogol Bordello, Jimmy Eat World, more
southside.de/en

JAS June Experience
6/23-7/1 // Aspen, CO
Jon Batiste & Stay Human, Michael McDonald, Earth, Wind & Fire, Lisa Fischer & Grand Baton, Tower of Power, more
jazzaspensnowmass.org

Tilted Earth
6/24 // Cornville, AZ
The London Souls, The Shinyribs, Decker, Muskellungs, more
tiltedearthfestival.com

Arroyo Seco Weekend
6/24-25 // Pasadena, CA
Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers, Alabama Shakes, The Meters, Dawes, Mumford & Sons, Weezer, The Shins, Fitz & The Tantrums, Andrew Bird, Galactic, more
arroyosecoweekend.com

Awakenings
6/24-25 // Spaarnwoude, Netherlands
Loco Dice, Ame, The Black Madonna, Ici Sans Merci, Joris Voorn, Butch, Ash Roy, Oliver Koletzki, more
awakeningsfestival.nl

Mamby on the Beach
6/24-25 // Chicago, IL
MGMT, Local Natives, Misterwives, Miike Snow, Lotus, Flying Lotus, Thundercat, Cut Copy, Marian Hill, Raury, more
mambybeach.com

Roskilde
6/24-7/1 // Roskilde, Denmark
Foo Fighters, A Tribe Called Quest, Arcade Fire, Justice, Blink-182, The Weeknd, The xx, Lorde, G-Eazy, Solange, more roskilde-festival.dk

Rock in Roma
6/24-7/2 // Rome, Italy
Red Hot Chili Peppers, The xx, The Offspring, Marilyn Manson, Ms. Lauryn Hill, Damian Marley Phoenix, Kasabian, Alter Bridge, more
rockinroma.com

Hideout
6/26-30 // Novalija, Croatia
Major Lazer Soundsystem, Diplo, Jamie Jones, The Martinez Brothers, Hannah Wants, Danny Howard, Stormzy, My Nu Leng, more
hideoutfestival.com

Volt
6/27-7/1 // Sopron, Hungary
Linkin Park, Ellie Goulding, Imagine Dragons, Fatboy Slim, Paramore, The Cult, Knife Party, The Devil Wears Prada, Of Mice & Men, more
voltfestival.com

Bravalla
6/28-7/1 // Norrköping, Sweden
The Chainsmokers, The Killers, Linkin Park, Prophets of Rage, System of a Down, Mac Miller, Alesso, Gavin James, Baroness, Miriam Bryant, more bravallafestival.se/en

Open'er
6/28-7/1 // Gdynia, Poland
Radiohead, Foo Fighters, The Weeknd, Mac Miller, The xx, James Blake, G-Eazy, Moderat, Prophets of Rage, more opener.pl/en

Summerfest
6/28-7/2 & 7/4-9 // Milwaukee, WI
Red Hot Chili Peppers, Luke Bryan, Zac Brown Band, P!nk, The Chainsmokers, Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers, Chris Stapleton, Bob Dylan, Outlaw Music Festival, Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit, Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats, more
summerfest.com

Love International
6/28-7/5 // Tisno, Croatia
Ben UFO, Call Super, Eric Duncan, DJ Nature, Optimo, Paranoid London, Tim Sweeney, Gerd Janson, Job Jobse, Andy Hart, more
loveinternationalfestival.com

Jennifer Starr

Frendly Gathering
6/29-7/1 // Waitsfield, VT
Twiddle, Yonder Mountain String Band, Turkuaz, Charles Bradley, Moon Hooch, Pigeons Playing Ping Pong, Monophonics, Kat Wright, Cobi, more
frendlygathering.com

Into the Valley
6/29-7/1 // Rummu, Estonia
Anna Hanna, Honey Dijon, Hunee, Andrey Zots, Nastia, Anthea, Rebolledo, Vlada, Antal, Dasha Redkina, more
musicgoesfurther.com

Provinssi
6/29-7/1 // Seinäjoki, Finland
The Killers, Ellie Goulding, In Flames, Die Antwoord, Fickle Friends, The Hives, Children of Bodom, Danzig, more provinssi.fi

Vida
6/29-7/1 // Barcelona, Spain
Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Phoenix, Real Estate, Dr. Dog, Devendra Banhart, Warpaint, Jagwar Ma, more en.vidafestival.com

Essence
6/29-7/2 // New Orleans, LA
Diana Ross, John Legend, Solange, Chance the Rapper, Lizzo, Mary J Blige, Chaka Khan, Jill Scott, Master P, more
essence.com/festival-2017

Highberry
6/29-7/2 // Eureka Springs, AR
The Floozies, Dark Star Orchestra, Funky Meters, Dopapod, Perpetual Groove, The Marcus King Band, Pink Talking Fish, Horseshoes & Hand Grenades, The Nth Power, more
highberryfestival.com

High Sierra R
6/29-7/2 // Quincy, CA
Trey Anastasio Band, Ween, STS9, Andrew Bird, Snarky Puppy, Galactic, The Greyboy Allstars, Hard Working Americans, Deer Tick, Mike Gordon, The Travelin' McCourys, White Denim, more
highsierramusic.com

OpenAir St. Gallen
6/29-7/2 // St. Gallen, Switzerland
Lorde, alt-J, Bastille, Michael Kiwanuka, Passenger, Glass Animals, Pegasus, Justice, more
openairsg.ch/en

Rock Werchter
6/29-7/2 // Werchter, Belgium
Radiohead, Kings of Leon, Arcade Fire, alt-J, Foo Fighters, Bonobo, Dropkick Murphys, Future Islands, Glass Animals, Imagine Dragons, more rockwerchter.be/nl

Garorock
6/30-7/2 // Marmande, France
Phoenix, Diplo, Foals, Solomun, London Grammar, Georgio, M.I.A., Mac Miller, Royal Blood, Flatbush Zombies, more garorock.com

Great Blue Heron
6/30-7/2 // Sherman, NY
Donna the Buffalo, Rusted Root, Jim Lauderdale, The Sim Redmond Band, ReggaeInfinity, Western Centuries, more
greatblueheron.com

Main Square
6/30-7/2 // Arras, France
Radiohead, System of a Down, Major Lazer, Above & Beyond, Die Antwoord, Savages, Machine Gun Kelly, Biffy Clyro, more
mainsquarefestival.fr

moe.down
6/30-7/2 // Turin, NY
moe., Blackberry Smoke, Fishbone, Railroad Earth, Ryan Montbleau, Twiddle, Al & The Transamericans Floodwood, Hayley Jane & The Primates, Kung Fu, more
moe.org/festival

British Summer Time
6/30-7/9 // London, United Kingdom
Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers, Stevie Nicks, Green Day, Justin Bieber, Kings of Leon, Phil Collins, The Killers, Blondie, The Lumineers, more
bst-hydepark.com

Montreux Jazz
6/30-7/15 // Montreux, Switzerland
alt-J, Fleet Foxes, Kasabian, The 1975, Erykah Badu, Pet Shop Boys, Solange, Hamilton Leithauser, The Lemon Twigs, Kevin Morby, more
montreuxjazzfestival.com

Worldwide
7/3-9 // Sète, France
Motor City Drum Ensemble, Devendra Banhart, Addison Groove, The Black Madonna, The Cinematic Orchestra, Adrian Sherwood, Sun Ra Arkestra, more
worldwidefestival.com

Willie Nelson's 4th of July Picnic
7/4 // Austin, TX
Willie Nelson & Family, Sheryl Crow, Kacey Musgraves, Jamey Johnson, Steve Earle & The Dukes, Margo Price, Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real, more
thecircuit.com/events

SUMMER SPOTLIGHT

THE HEAD AND THE HEART

LARSON SUTTON

THE HEAD AND THE HEART could be forgiven for succumbing to some of the trappings of stardom. After all, the Seattle indie-folk favorites have graduated from Sub Pop, the premier independent imprint, to industry powerhouse Warner Bros. And the band's first single, "All We Ever Knew," from their 2016 major-label debut, *Signs of Light*, hit No. 1 on the Alternative Songs chart.

"We got a semi-truck. That, to us, is a rock-star move," says drummer Tyler Williams from his home in Richmond, Va. "It means we can carry more equipment now."

Signing on with the big leagues did, however, coincide with a more disconcerting development—the substance abuse issues that pushed founding member Josiah Johnson to a dangerous low and led to his hiatus from touring. Nonetheless, the successful *Signs of Light* features his contributions, including the poignant, album-closing title track. Williams is optimistic that Johnson will make his full-time return sooner rather than later.

"He's doing a lot better. We've started to have conversations about when he will come back," says Williams. "He got himself in a dark place creatively, physically and mentally, where we were concerned for his health. Nothing's more important than his life."

Williams says Johnson is actively writing songs for the band's next album, and he sat in during bandmate Jonathan Russell's solo show in San Francisco. Guitarist Matt Gervais, husband to the band's multi-instrumentalist, Charity Rose Thielen, has been performing in Johnson's stead. So what happens when Johnson returns to a group that is different from what it was when he left?

"We've grown a lot on this record. We're playing a lot bigger venues," Williams says. "We're only going to be stronger if Matt stays with us and Josiah comes back as well. It's a win-win for us as a band, and we're excited to broach those topics. At the crux of the decision is what's healthy for Josiah."

The group believes that staying healthy means embracing what they see as the next logical step in their progression as artists. For a band that had always maintained a do-it-yourself ethos, right down to handmade sleeves for their self-released first album, the Warner Bros. deal was a chance to let go. Rather than shifting straight from the stage to the studio, they took a year off, writing in a variety of locales and cutting early tracks in Northern California in the living room of a Stinson Beach house.

"In our band, there's always resistance to everything," Williams says, laughing. "We wouldn't have moved in a direction we felt we weren't ready for, or felt like this band couldn't do."

They widened their scope of influences from mainstays Fleet Foxes and Band of Horses to include Kanye West and Taylor Swift. They also extended enough trust to each other to individually choose what would be best for each member to sing and play. And, for the first time, they worked with a producer, enlisting Grammy winner Jay Joyce to take their Stinson Beach rough draft to its maximum potential.

"We love the people at Sub Pop," says Williams. "But we felt like we had done everything in that world. Let's try new ideas, other avenues."

Those other avenues led to more sweeping, panoramic latitudes on *Signs of Light*. Stacked layers of sound suggest potential anthems befitting the larger spaces that the band will inhabit on tour. When Williams discusses the new material, he could just as easily be referring to the group itself.

"It was organic," he says. "The songs demanded it. They needed room to breathe and grow into this big sound."

This summer, The Head and the Heart will take their newfound "big sound" on the road in the States and abroad. The band still relishes its underdog role at the major festivals and will alternate appearances at Bonnaroo, Lollapalooza (Chicago and Berlin) and Newport Folk with cross-continental headlining stops, including two nights at Colorado's Red Rocks. Most of all, they're looking forward to the freedom and flow of energy in the great outdoors.

"There are no walls to keep that [energy] in," Williams says. "It's really the clearest representation of who we are as a band when we play outside."

For those missing The Head and the Heart's cozy familiarity, this past spring, the group released its *Stinson Beach Sessions*—a collection of nascent demos from the beach house. Still, Williams is quick to address the leap to a major label as part of a broader concern of artist survival.

"There's not a lot of space for bands like us in that [indie] world. It's not where we fit in anymore," he says. "To keep doing what we love—playing music for people every night—we were like, 'Let's go over here.' I'm sure we alienated some people who don't understand what it takes to try and thrive creatively, but we didn't want this thing to die. We're going to do what makes sense to keep playing music."

You can catch The Head and the Heart at Hangout, Sasquatch!, Governors Ball, Bonnaroo, Mountain Jam, Latitude, Newport Folk, Hinterland, Lollapalooza, Travelers' Rest, Lollapalooza Berlin, Golden Leaves and elsewhere.

Balaton Sound
7/5-9 // Zamárdi, Hungary
Afrojack, Zeds Dead, Tiesto, Armin Van Buuren, G-Eazy, Hardwell, Marshmello, Jason Derulo, more
sziget.hu/balatonsound_english

EXIT
7/5-9 // Novi Sad, Serbia
The Killers, Liam Gallagher, Hardwell, Alan Walker, Years & Years, Solomun, Jason Derulo, The Damned, Jake Bugg, more exitfest.org/en

Obscene Extreme
7/5-9 // Trutnov, Czech Republic
Holy Moses, Age of Woe, Darkness, Sinister, Black Skies Burn, Deathtopia, Total Chaos, more
obsceneextreme.cz

2000trees
7/6-8 // Withington, United Kingdom
Slaves, Nothing But Thieves, Lower Than Atlantis, The Menzingers, Beach Slang, The Front Bottoms, The Wonder Years, Honey Blood, more
twothousandtreesfestival.co.uk

Bilbao BBK Live
7/6-8 // Bilbao, Spain
Depeche Mode, The Killers, Phoenix, Die Antwoord, Justice, Two Door Cinema Club, Brian Wilson, Fleet Foxes, Royal Blood, The 1975, more
bilbaobbklive.com/en-us

Blissfields
7/6-8 // Woodmancott, United Kingdom
The Cinematic Orchestra, Metronomy, Lady Leshurr, Shura, Sundara Karma, The Japanese House, Tom Grennan, more
blissfields.co.uk

Electric Love
7/6-8 // Salzkammergut, Austria
Hardwell, A-Trak, DJ Snake, Marshmello, Flux Pavilion, Krewella, Martin Garrix, Zedd, more
electriclove.at/en

Mad Cool
7/6-8 // Madrid, Spain
Foo Fighters, Green Day, Kings of Leon, Foals, Belle & Sebastian, Ryan Adams, Wilco, alt-J, Foster the People, The Lumineers, Kurt Vile & The Violators, more
madcoolfestival.es/en/home

NOS Alive
7/6-8 // Oeiras, Portugal
Ryan Adams, Foo Fighters, Fleet Foxes, The Weeknd, The xx, Phoenix, Warpaint, Local Natives, Imagine Dragons, Depeche Mode, alt-J, Spoon, Cage the Elephant, more
nosalive.com/en

Pohoda
7/6-8 // Trenčín, Slovakia
alt-J, Solange, M.I.A., Birdy, Jake Bugg, The Thurston Moore Group, Future Islands, Slaves, The Jesus & Mary Chain, more
pohodafestival.sk/en

Resurrection Fest
7/6-8 // Viveiro, Spain
Rammstein, Anthrax, Rancid, Mastodon, Sabaton, Dropkick Murphys, Airbourne, Suicidal Tendencies, Mayhem, Annihilator, more
resurrectionfest.es/en

Common Ground
7/6-9 // Lansing, MI
Big Sean, Toby Keith, Alessia Cara, Fetty Wap, Shinedown, AJR, James Arthur, Here Come the Mummies, more
commongroundfest.com

Les Eurockéennes
7/6-9 // Belfort, France
Arcade Fire, Phoenix, Royal Blood, Solange, Dropkick Murphys, Moderat, Gucci Mane, DJ Snake, Iggy Pop, more
eurockeennes.fr

NASS
7/6-9 // Bristol, United Kingdom
Method Man, Redman, Pendulum Live, Kano, Giggs, Sigma, Wiley, Krept & Konan, more
nassfestival.com

Noisily
7/6-9 // Leicestershire, United Kingdom
Michael Mayer, Congo Natty, Zen Mechanics, Dominik Eulberg, Gabriel Ananda, Acid Pauli, System 7, Andreas Henneberg, Tripswitch, Cosmic Boys, James Monro, more
noisilyfestival.com

Winnipeg Folk
7/6-9 // Winnipeg, Canada
The Shins, The Felice Brothers, Margaret Glaspy, Hot Rize, Damien Jurado, City and Colour, Barenaked Ladies, Daniel Lanois, Big Thief, more
winnipegfolkfestival.ca

Festival d'été de Québec
7/6-16 // Québec City, Canada
The Who, Metallica, Kendrick Lamar, Muse, Flume, Lady Antebellum, Gorillaz, Los Lonely Boys, Wolf Parade, more
infofestival.com/en

Ottawa Bluesfest
7/6-16 // Ottawa, Canada
Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers, LCD Soundsystem, Brandi Carlile, 50 Cent, Death from Above 1979, Delicate Steve, Gary Clark Jr., Muse, Tegan and Sara, The Shins, The Zombies, Toby Keith, more
ottawabluesfest.ca

80/35
7/7-8 // Des Moines, IA
The Shins, MGMT, Action Bronson, Elephant Revival, The Motet, Chicano Batman, Pigeons Playing Ping Pong, Diarrhea Planet, more
80-35.com

Master Musicians
7/7-8 // Somerset, KY
Dawes, Blackberry Smoke, Old 97's, Parker Millsap, Colter Wall, Roots of a Rebellion, The Rooster's Crow, The Local Honeys, Shannon McNally, more
mastermusiciansfestival.org

New York State Blues
7/7-8 // Syracuse, NY
JJ Grey & Mofro, Amy Helm, The Nighthawks with Bob Margolin, Chris O'Leary Band, Noah Wotherspoon Band, Slam Allen, Ron Spencer Band, more
nysbluesfest.com

Bluedot
7/7-9 // Cheshire, UK
alt-J, Orbital, Pixies, Warpaint, Goldfrapp, Soulwax, Hawkwind, Ezra Furman, Shobaleader One, more
discoverthebluedot.com

Cavendish Beach
7/7-9 // Cavendish, Canada
Zac Brown Band, Little Big Town, Kip Moore, Brothers Osborne, Brandy Clark, Kane Brown, High Valley, Chad Brownlee, Gord Bamford, more
cavendishbeachmusic.com

Cornbury
7/7-9 // Oxfordshire, UK
Bryan Adams, Kaiser Chiefs, The Pretenders, Jools Holland, Tom Chaplin, Jack Savoretti, Ward Thomas, St. Paul & The Broken Bones, Right Said Fred, more
cornburyfestival.com

Cruilla
7/7-9 // Barcelona, Spain
Jamiroquai, Ryan Adams, Two Door Cinema Club, Die Antwoord, The Lumineers, Pet Shop Boys, The Prodigy, Little Steven & The Disciples of Soul, more
cruillabarcelona.com/en

Festival Beauregard
7/7-9 // Normandy, France
Placebo, Phoenix, Iggy Pop, Foals, Die Antwoord, Metronomy, Grandaddy, Michael Kiwanuka, Echo & The Bunnymen, Jagwar Ma, more
festivalbeauregard.com

Ruisrock
7/7-9 // Turku, Finland
Bastille, DJ Snake, Martin Garrix, Travis Scott, Prophets, Tyga, Tove Lo, Mac Miller, Stormzy, Lil Uzi Vert, Kygo, more
ruisrock.fi

TRNSMT
7/7-9 // Glasgow, United Kingdom
Radiohead, Belle & Sebastian, Kasabian, Rag'n'Bone Man, Catfish & The Bottlemen, George Ezra, The 1975, Two Door Cinema Club, more
trnsmtfest.com

Wireless
7/7-9 // London, UK
Chance the Rapper, The Weeknd, Nas, Skepta, Rae Sremmurd, Torey Lanez, Bryson Tiller, G-Eazy, Fetty Wap, Lil Yachty, more
wirelessfestival.co.uk

Bass Coast
7/7-10 // Merritt, Canada
B. Bravo, Sango, Eli Escobar, Breach, Egoless, Kasra, Call Super, The Funk Hunters, The Librarian, Doctor Jeep, more basscoast.ca

18hrs
7/8 // Zaandam, Netherlands
Darius Syrossian, Egbert Live, Ferro, Jay Lumen, Luuk Van Dijk, Paul Ritch, more 18hrsfestival.nl

Breckenridge Brewery Hootenanny
7/8 // Littleton, CO
Hootenanny All-Stars, Sam Bush Band, Phoffman/Beck Quintet, Jeff Austin Band, Jon Stickley Trio with Andy Thorn, Zolopht, Gipsy Moon, The Sweet Lillies, more
breckbrew.com/events

Pleasantville Music
7/8 // Pleasantville, NY
Blues Traveler, Living Colour, Suzanne Vega, Pousette-Dart Band, Hollis Brown, more
pleasantvillemusicfestival.com

Levitate
7/8-9 // Marshfield, MA
Ziggy Marley, Umphrey's McGee, Lake Street Drive, Dispatch, The Revivalists, Deer Tick, JJ Grey & Mofro, Twiddle, more
levitatemusicfestival.com

RIDE
7/8-9 // Telluride, CO
Beck, Ben Harper & The Innocent Criminals, The John Butler Trio, Kaleo, Rival Sons, Jackie Greene, BIG Somemore ridefestival.com

Fresh Island
7/11-13 // Novalja, Croatia
French Montana, Sean Paul, Rae Sremmurd, DJ Jazzy Jeff, Lady Leshurr, Cheese on Bread, Faded, Gold Teeth, more
fresh-island.org

Kew the Music
7/11-16 // Richmond, United Kingdom
Passenger, Razorlight, All Saints, The Bluetones, Reef, Hacienda Classical, James, Mary J. Blige, more
kewthemusic.org

Brian Spady

Camp Bisco

Slottsfjell
7/12-15 // Tønsberg, Norway
The Prodigy, AURORA, G-Eazy, Gucci Mane, Mac Miller, Tove Lo, Astrid S, Margaret Glaspy, Beachheads, Dagny, Jillionaire, more slottsfjell.no

Dour
7/12-16 // Dour, Belgium
Solange, M.I.A., Phoenix, Two Door Cinema Club, Earl Sweatshirt, De La Soul, Nas, Kate Tempest, Lee Fields & The Expressions, St. Paul & The Broken Bones, more dourfestival.eu/en

Camp Bisco
7/13-15 // Scranton, PA
The Disco Biscuits, Bassnectar, Pretty Lights Live, GRiZ, Lotus, Gramatik, Beats Antique, 12th Planet, Action Bronson, Emancipator, Turkuaz, Shpongle, more campbisco.com

Super Bock Super Rock
7/13-15 // Lisbon, Portugal
Red Hot Chili Peppers, Capitão Fausto, Kevin Morby, Boogarins, Tyler the Creator, Deftones, Foster the People, more superbocksuperrock.pt

Rock Fest
7/13-15 // Cadott, WI
Avenged Sevenfold, Rob Zombie, Slayer, Volbeat, Korn, Shinedown, Lamb of God, Stonesour, Megadeth, Insane Clown Posse, Anthrax, more rock-fest.com

Sea Dance
7/13-15 // Budva, Montenegro
Sean Paul, Fatboy Slim, John Newman, Bad Copy, Filip Xavi, Dino R, Proximus, Soft 845, Tanya Moss, Amelie Lens, more seadancefestival.me

Super Bock Super Rock
7/13-15 // Lisbon, Portugal
Red Hot Chili Peppers, Future, Kevin Morby, James Vincent McMorrow, Tyler the Creator, Deftones, Foster the People, more superbocksuperrock.pt

Airbeat One
7/13-16 // Neustadt-Glewe, Germany
Armin van Buuren, Axwell ^ Ingrosso, Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike, Hardwell, Martin Solveig, Don Diablo, Oliver Heldens, Tiesto, more airbeat-one.de

California WorldFest
7/13-16 // Grass Valley, CA
Michael Franti & Spearhead, Seun Kuti & Egypt 80, Tommy Emmanuel, Peter Yarrow, Alash, Etana, Dakhabraki, Nattali Rize, Joan Soriano, more worldfest.net

Country Thunder Craven
7/13-16 // Regina, Canada
Blake Shelton, Keith Urban, Toby Keith, Cassadee Pope, Dallas Smith, Old Dominion, Terri Clark, Dallas Smith, Ryan Hurd, more countrythunder.com

Electric Castle
7/13-16 // Bontida, Romania
Duke Dumont, deadmau5, Franz Ferdinand, Zedd, alt-J, Nero, UNKLE, Maceo Plex, SOHN, House of Pain, Architects, more electriccastle.ro

Festival Internacional de Benicàssim
7/13-16 // Castellón, Spain
Red Hot Chili Peppers, The Weeknd, Kasabian, Foals, Liam Gallagher, Ride, Bonobo, Blossoms, Slaves, Tyler the Creator, Surfin' Bichos, Temples, more fiberfib.com/en

Festival Musilac
7/13-16 // Le Bourget-du-Lac, France
Phoenix, Die Antwoord, Sting, Justice, The Lumineers, Kungs, Ibrahim Maalouf, Pone, LP, Petit Biscu, Calypso Rose, more musilac.com

Great South Bay Music Festival
7/13-16 // Patchogue, NY
Gov't Mule, The Zombies, Rusted Root, The Wailers, 311, Taking Back Sunday, New Found Glory, Eddie Money, G. Love & Special Sauce, more greatsouthbaymusicfestival.com

Grey Fox Bluegrass
7/13-16 // Oak Hill, NY
Dry Branch Fire Squad (Host Band), The Del McCoury Band, Jerry Douglas Band, Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder, The Infamous Stringdusters, The Steep Canyon Rangers, The Gibson Brothers, The Travelin' McCourys, Jeff Austin Band, more greyfoxbluegrass.com

Hodag Country
7/13-16 // Rhinelander, WI
Frankie Ballard, Country Gold Tour, Billy Currington, Randy Houser, Locash, Smithfield, Neal McCoy, Collin Raw, Raelynn, more hodag.com

Latitude
7/13-16 // Southwold, United Kingdom
The 1975, Goldfrapp, The Horrors, The Japanese House, Glass Animals, Fleet Foxes, The Divine Comedy, Baloji, more latitudefestival.com

Northwest String Summit
7/13-16 // North Plains, OR
Yonder Mountain String Band, Greensky Bluegrass, The Del McCoury Band, Elephant Revival, Shook Twins, The California Honeydrops, more stringsummit.com

Pemberton
7/13-16 // Pemberton, Canada
Chance the Rapper, Muse, A Tribe Called Quest, Major Lazer, HAIM, Run The Jewels, Ween, Diplo, MGMT, Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats, Slightly Stoopid, Ben Harper & The Innocent Criminals, GRiZ, The Marcus King Band, Thundercat, Shovels & Rope, more pembertonmusicfestival.com

Vielles Charrues
7/13-16 // Carhaix-Plouguer, France
Alltta (20SYL & Mr. J. Medeiros), Deluxe, FEDER, Justice, Phoenix, Kungs, Renaud, Jean-Michel Jarre, Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, more lesvieillescharrues.fr

GEM
7/14 // Ganarjiis Mukhuri, Georgia
Anushka, Carlo Lio, Cobert, Gescu, Hubble, Marc Romboy, Ponura, Molly, Roustam, Seb Zito, Topper, Wolf & Lamb, more gem-fest.com

Camp Euforia
7/14-15 // Lone Tree, NY
Euforquestra, Beats Antique, Boombox, Public Property, Mr. Baber's Neighbors, The Way Down Wanderers, Flash in a Pan, more campeuforia.com

Lovebox
7/14-15 // London, United Kingdom
Frank Ocean, Jamie xx, Mac Miller, Rag 'N' Bone Man, Mick Jenkins, Rex Orange County, Jack Swift, Artikal, Giggs, more loveboxfestival.com

Chicago Open Air
7/14-16 // Bridgeview, IL
KISS, Anthrax, Seether, Ozzy Osbourne, Slayer, Body Count, Metal Church, Night Verses, Kyng, Norma Jean, Whores, more chicagoopenair.com

Forecastle R
7/14-16 // Louisville, KY
LCD Soundsystem, Weezer, Odesza, Cage the Elephant, PJ Harvey, Run the Jewels, Vince Staples, Tycho, Conor Oberst, more forecastlefest.com

Green River
7/14-16 // Greenfield, MA
The Mavericks, Lake Street Dive, Joe Russo's Almost Dead, Big Al Anderson, Funky Meters, San Fermin, Robbie Fulks, more greenriverfestival.com

Hillside
7/14-16 // Guelph, Canada
Ambre McLean, Viktorija Arsic, Missy Bauman, DJ Shub, Emily Klaasen, Murder Murder, Steve Poltz, Le Trouble, more hillsidefestival.ca

Longitude
7/14-16 // Dublin, Ireland
Stormzy, Picture This, The Weeknd, Skepta, Mumford & Sons w/ special guest Baaba Maal, Jack Garratt, Catfish and the Bottlemen, Kaytranada, Glass Animals, more longitude.ie

Mares Vivas
7/14-16 // Vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal
Sting, Scorpion, Bastille, Your Jorge, ACT, Miguel Araujo, Top Chaplin, Diogo Piçarra, Electro Love, more maresvivas.meo.pt

Melt!
7/14-16 // Ferropolis, Germany
Bonobo, Die Antwoord, Dixon, Glass Animals, Hercules & Love Affair, Kamasi Washington, M.I.A., Maceo Plex, MØ, Phoenix, more meltfestival.de/en

Pitchfork
7/14-16 // Chicago, IL
LCD Soundsystem, Dirty Projectors, Danny Brown, A Tribe Called Quest, PJ Harvey, Angel Olsen, Solange, Nicolas Jaar, The Avalanches, more pitchfork.com/festival

Sloss
7/15 // Birmingham, AL
Alabama Shakes, Odesza, Spoon, Tycho, Cherub, Waka Flocka Flame, Beach Slang, Wray, Nerves Baddington, Holy Youth, more slossfest.com

Andrew Blackstein

The Classic West
7/15-16 // Los Angeles, CA
Eagles, Fleetwood Mac, Steely Dan, Journey, The Doobie Brothers, Earth, Wind & Fire
theclassicwest.com

Paleo
7/18-23 // Nyon, Switzerland
Red Hot Chili Peppers, Arcade Fire, Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, Pixies, Foals, Midnight Oil, Tyro, Camille, Kaleo, more yeah.paleo.ch

Colours of Ostrava
7/19-22 // Ostrava, Czech Republic
Norah Jones, Imagine Dragons, alt-J, Birdy, Moderat, Nouvelle Vague, St. Paul & the Broken Bones, King Creosote, more colours.cz

Deep Roots Mountain Revival
7/20-22 // Masontown, WV
Brandi Carlile, Dr. Dog, Lettuce, White Denim, TAUK, The Hip Abduction, Cabinet, Dead 27s, Forlorn Strangers, more
mountainrevival.com

Moondance Jam Rock and Classic Rock
7/20-22 // Walker, MN
Halestorm, Steve Miller Band, The Pretty Reckless, Peter Frampton, Vince Neil, Melissa Etheridge, Dorothy, more
moondancejam.com

Country Thunder Wisconsin
7/20-23 // Twin Lakes, WI
Jason Aldean, Keith Urban, Thomas Rhett, Maddie & Tae, CAM, Runaway June, High Valley, Dallas Smith, Dorado Dorado, more
countrythunder.com

Secret Garden Party
7/20-23 // Huntingdon, United Kingdom
Metronomy, Crystal Fighters, Toots & The Maytals, Wild Beasts, Kat Nash, Akala, Bonzai, Deap Vally, Jain, Zak Abel, more
secretgardenparty.com

Wanderlust Squaw Valley
7/20-23 // Olympic Valley, CA
Lettuce, Little Dragon, DJ Drez, Beebs, Elijah Ray, Jesse Blake, Patrick Mureithi, Trevor Exter, Zack Darling, more wanderlust.com

Chagstock
7/21-22 // Whiddon Down, United Kingdom
Soul II Soul, Dub Pistols, Raghu Dixit, Skinny Lister, Undercover Hippy, Mr Tea & the Minions, New Crisis, Rising Tide, more
chagstock.info

Deer Shed
7/21-23 // North Yorkshire, United Kingdom
Teenage Fanclub, The Divine Comedy, King Creosote, Arab Strap, Jesca Hoop, Kate Tempest, Merchandise, Honeyblood, Teleman, more deershedfestival.com

FYF Fest
7/21-23 // Los Angeles, CA
Missy Elliott, Björk, Frank Ocean, Nine Inch Nails, A Tribe Called Quest, Erykah Badu, Iggy Pop, Solange, Run The Jewels, more
fyffest.com

Jerry Jam
7/21-23 // Bath, NH
Melvin Seals & JGB, Assembly of Dust, John K Band, Kung Fu, Max Creek, Pink Talking Fish, Cabinet, The Giving Tree Band, more
jerryjam.com

Karoondinha
7/21-23 // Centre Hall, PA
John Legend, Odesza, The Roots, Chromeo, Alessia Cara, X Ambassadors, NEEDTOBREATHE, Maren Morris, St. Lucia, more
karoondinha.com

Splendour in the Grass
7/21-23 // Yelgun, Australia
The Strokes, The Cure, Flume, The Avalanches, James Blake, At the Drive-in, Violent Soho, Hermitude, Band of Horses, more
splendourinthegrass.com

Tomorrowland
7/21-30 // Boom, Belgium
Alok, Yves V, Laidback Luke, Krewella, Seven Lions, Slushii, Pan-pot, Adam Beyer, Joseph Capriati, more
tomorrowland.com

FloydFest
7/26-30 // Floyd, VA
Thievery Corporation, Michael Franti & Spearhead, Leftover Salmon, Steel Pulse, Marty Stuart & His Fabulous Superlatives, White Denim, The Hip Abduction, Larry Keel Experience, TAUK, more
floydfest.com

Calgary Folk
7/27-30 // Calgary, Canada
Tanya Tagaq, Coeur De Pirate, Blue Rodeo, Yola Carter, Dave Alvin & Phil Alvin with the Guilty Ones, more
calgaryfolkfest.com

Camp
7/27-30 // East Lulworth, United Kingdom
Mark Ronson, Madness, Brian Wilson performing Pet Sounds, All Saints, Holly Johnson, Leftfield, Louisa Johnson, The Bootleg Beatles, Ray Blk, more
campbestival.net

Country Crossings Music
7/27-30 // Central Point, OR
Keith Urban, Luke Bryan, Chris Stapleton, Jake Owen, Brett Eldredge, Lee Brice, Billy

SHADEFEST
JUNE 22-24
AVENUE MARYLAND
PERPETUAL GROOVE
PEOPLE'S BLUES OF RICHMOND • LITZ
ELECTRIC LOVE MACHINE PERFORMS WEEN
BROCCOLI SAMURAI • TROPIDELIC • TEDDY MIDNIGHT • URBAN SOIL
FORMULA 5 • GOOSE • JOUWALA COLLECTIVE • BENCOOLEN
KENDALL STREET COMPANY • OF TOMORROW • DALTON DASH
SOUTH HILL BANKS • BIG MAMA SHAKES • THE FOLLY
BURNING FIRE REGGAE BAND • SURPRISE ATTACK • SID KINGSLEY
MC COREY AXT
LATE NIGHT: TOXIC MOXIE • MIKE CANDELA • DALTON DASH • JOSIE MCQUEEN
SOUTH HILL BANKS • TOO INDECENT • KEITH YETTER BAND
LIVE ART • SWIMMING • OPEN JAM TENT • LATE NIGHT BLUEGRASS • VIP PACKAGES • VENDORS • FOOD
Shadefest Music Festival
Shadefest.com

Currington, Dan & Shay, William Michael Morgan, more cxfest.com

Kendal Calling
7/27-30 // Penrith, United Kingdom
Franz Ferdinand, Stereophonics, Editors, Jake Bugg, Kate Nash, Manic Street Preachers, Frightened Rabbit, The Coral, Seasick Steve, more kendalcalling.co.uk

Red Ants Pants Music
7/27-30 // White Sulphur Springs, MT
The Bellamy Brothers, Lucinda Williams, Asleep At The Wheel, Shooter Jennings & Waymore's Outlaws, Turnpike Troubadours, Parker Millsap, James McMurty, Mandolin Orange, The Waifs, more redantspantsmusicfestival.com

Standon Calling
7/27-30 // Standon, United Kingdom
Orbital, Clean Bandit, Slaves, Laura Mvula, Gary Numan, Steve Mason, Nothing But Thieves, !!!, British Sea Power, more standon-calling.com

Y Not
7/27-30 // Derbyshire, United Kingdom
Two Door Cinema Club, Clean Bandit, Stereophonics, The Vaccines, Jake Bugg, Kate Nash, Maxïmo Park, Feeder, Twin Atlantic, more ynotfestivals.co.uk

Soundwave Croatia
7/27-31 // Tisno, Croatia
The Pharcyde, Roy Ayers, Gogo, Penguin, Gilles Peterson, Laura Mvula, Horse Meat Disco, Egyptian Lover, Yussef Kamaal, more soundwavecroatia.com

Fuji Rock Festival
7/28-30 // Yuzawa-cho, Japan
Gorillaz, Aphex Twin, Björk, Queens of the Stone Age, LCD Soundsystem, Lorde, The xx, Cornelius, Major Lazer, more fujirock-eng.com

Leefest
7/28-30 // London, United Kingdom
Jake Bugg, Wild Beasts, Fickle Friends, Tom Grennan, Keston Cobblers Club, Ider, Hannah Peel, Bad Sounds, The Bay Rays, more leefest.org

Low
7/28-30 // Benidorm, Spain
Franz Ferdinand, Pixies, Nada Surf, Mando Diao, !!!, Roosevelt, Satellite Stories, Dorian, Lori Meyers, more lowfestival.es

Mountain Home Country
7/28-30 // Elmore County, ID
Keith Urban, Billy Currington, Dan & Shay, Kane Brown, Luke Bryan, Brett Eldredge, Eric Paslay, William Michael Morgan, Chris Stapleton, more mountainhomefestival.com

Lollapalooza

Newport Folk R
7/28-30 // Newport, RI
Fleet Foxes, John Prine, Nikki Lane, The Head and the Heart, Robert Ellis, Regina Spektor, Alone & Together, Aaron Lee Tasjan, Seratones, more newportfolk.org

Panorama
7/28-30 // New York, NY
Frank Ocean, Solange, MGMT, Tame Impala, alt-J, Nick Murphy, Nine Inch Nails, A Tribe Called Quest, Justice, more panorama.nyc

RockyGrass
7/28-30 // Lyons, CO
Sam Bush Bluegrass Band, The Del McCoury Band, Earls of Leicester ft. Jerry Douglas, The Infamous Stringdusters, Peter Rowan, Darrell Scott Bluegrass Band, Tim O'Brien Band, Kruger Brothers with the Kontras Quartet, Laurie Lewis & The Right Hands, more bluegrass.com/rockygrass

Watershed
7/28-30 // George, WA
Bailey Bryan, Bobby Bones & the Raging Idiots, Chase Rice, Chris Stapleton, Darius Rucker, Eric Paslay, High Valley, Josh Abbott Band, Lauren Alaina, more watershedfest.com

WayHome
7/28-30 // Oro Station, Canada
Imagine Dragons, Frank Ocean, Flume, Justice, Solange, Marshmello, Vance Joy, Schoolboy Q, Tegan and Sara, more wayhome.com

XPoNential
7/28-30 // Camden, NJ
Wilco, Conor Oberst, Hop Along, Amos Lee & Friends featuring Preservation Hall Jazz Band, The Suffers, Chicano Batman, Drive-By Truckers, Charles Bradley & His Extraordinaires, Angel Olsen, more xpnfest.org

The Classic East
7/29-30 // Queens, NY
Eagles, Fleetwood Mac, Steely Dan, Journey, The Doobie Brothers, Earth, Wind & Fire theclassiceast.com

Tumble Down
7/29-30 // Burlington, VT
Twiddle, Everyone Orchestra, Holly Bowling, Mihali Savoulidis, Gang of Thieves, Lespecial, Backup Planet, Pitchblak Brass Band, Fruition, more twiddlemusic.com/tumble-down-2017

MEO Sudoeste
8/1-5 // Zambujeira do Mar, Portugal
The Chainsmokers, Richie Campbell, Mac Miller, DJ Snake, Marshmello, Two Door Cinema Club, Mishlawi, Martin Garrix, Lil Wayne, more sudoeste.meo.pt/en

Arenal Sound
8/1-6 // Borriana, Spain
Martin Garrix, Bastille, Icona Pop, Fedde Le Grand, Lori Meyers, Kase.O, Jake Bugg, Jonas Blue, Kakkmaddafakka, more arenalsound.com/en

A Summer's Tale
8/2-5 // Salzhausen, Germany
Pixies, PJ Harvey, Feist, Franz Ferdinand, Element of Crime, Birdy, Conor Oberst, Stereo MCs The Notwist, more asummerstale.de/en

Belladrum Tartan Heart
8/3-5 // Inverness, United Kingdom
Franz Ferdinand, Sister Sledge, KT Tunstall, The Pretenders, First Aid Kit, Feeder, Birdy, Gallagher and Lyle, Frank Carter & the Rattlesnakes, more tartanheartfestival.co.uk

Let it Roll
8/3-5 // Milovice, Czech Republic
Camo & Krooked, Netsky [DJ Set] & Script MC, Sub Focus [DJ Set] & ID, Agressor Bunx, Anile, Bop, Danny Byrd, DJ Guv, Drumsound & Bassline Smith, more letitroll.eu

Wacken
8/3-5 // Wacken, Germany
Marilyn Manson, Europe, Volbeat, Apocalyptica, Trivium, Lacuna Coil, Amon Amarth, Architects, The Boomtown Rats, more wacken.com/en

WE Fest
8/3-5 // Detroit Lakes, MN
Luke Bryan, Zac Brown Band, Lady Antebellum, Alan Jackson, Darius Rucker, Brett Eldredge, Randy Houser, Eli Young Band, Kelsea Ballerini, more wefest.com

The Werk Out
8/3-5 // Thornville, OH
The Werks, Gramatik, The Floozies, Dopapod, Dumpstaphunk, Twerkapod (Twiddle, The Werks and Dopapod), Future Rock, Zoogma, Sunsquabi, more thewerkoutfestival.com

Woodstock Festival Poland
8/3-5 // Kostrzyn nad Odra, Poland
Amon Amarth, Trivium, Slaves, Domowe Melodie, Dub Inc., Mando Diao, Laki Lan, Nothing But Thieves, The Qemsts, more en.woodstockfestival.pl

Big Valley Jamboree
8/3-6 // Camrose, Canada
Little Big Town, Willie Nelson, Jess Moskaluke, Madeline Merlo, Keith Urban, Kacey Musgraves, Tanya Tucker, Sam Palladio, Tracy Millar, more bigvalleyjamboree.com

Lollapalooza
8/3-6 // Chicago, IL
Muse, Lorde, Cage the Elephant, The Killers, Blink-182, Ryan Adams, Chance the Rapper, The xx, Arcade Fire, more lollapalooza.com

Pickathon
8/3-6 // Happy Valley, OR
Charles Bradley & His Extraordinaires, Dinosaur Jr., Drive-By Truckers, Deer Tick, Ty Segall, Mandolin Orange, A-Wa, J Mascis, Dungen, more pickathon.com

Untold
8/3-6 // Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Ellie Goulding, Hurts, Example & DJ Wire, Jasmine Thompson, Afrojack, Armin van Buuren, Axwell ^ Ingrosso, Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike, Hardwell, more untold.com

Roger Ho

Wilderness
8/3-6 // Oxfordshire, United Kingdom
Grace Jones, Two Door Cinema Club, Bonobo, First Aid Kit, Michael Kiwanuka, Toots & The Maytals, Aurora, Ray Blk, Hudson Taylor, more
wildernessfestival.com

Hinterland
8/4-5 // St. Charles, IA
alt-J, Ryan Adams, Gary Clark Jr., The Head and the Heart, Dwight Yoakam, Shakey Graves, Foxygen, Nikki Lane, JD McPherson, more
hinterlandiowa.com

ARISE
8/4-6 // Loveland, CO
Atmosphere, Tipper, Rising Appalachia, The Expendables, Brother Ali, Desert Dwellers, Dopapod, The Grateful Ball, The Travelin' McCourys, more
arisefestival.com

Falcon Ridge Folk
8/4-6 // Hillsdale, NY
Eric Andersen, Sawyer Fredericks, Rani Arbo & Daisy Mayhem, Tempest, the Slambovian Circus of Dreams, Brother Sun, Rod MacDonald, David Massengill, Abbie Gardner, more
falconridgefolk.com

Newport Jazz
8/4-6 // Newport, RI
Béla Fleck & The Flecktones, Maceo Parker, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Vijay Iyer & Wadada Leo Smith, One For All, Evan Christopher Clarinet Road & New Orleans Brass, Rodriguez Brothers, Snarky Puppy, Rhiannon Giddens, more
newportjazzfest.org

OFF
8/4-6 // Katowice, Poland
Anna von Hausswolff, Beak>, Carla Bozulich, Circuit Des Yeux, Conor Oberst, PJ Harvey, Duzy Jack, Feist, Group A, Helado Negro, more
off-festival.pl/en

Osheaga
8/4-6 // Montreal, Canada
The Weeknd, Muse, Lorde, Zeds Dead, Foster the People, Cage the Elephant, Father John Misty, Die Antwoord, Alabama Shakes, more osheaga.com/en

Telluride Jazz
8/4-6 // Telluride, CO
Mavis Staples, Macy Gray, Bootsy Collins & World-Wide Funk Drive, Lee Fields & The Expressions, Miles Mosley + The West Coast Get Down, The Suffers, FatsO, Vaud and the Villains, Davina and the Vagabonds, more
telluridejazz.org

Musikfest
8/4-13 // Bethlehem, PA
Santana, Chicago, Toby Keith, The Band Perry, Lee Brice & Justin Moore, Jethro Tull by Ian Anderson, more musikfest.org

Eastern Electrics
8/5 // London, United Kingdom
AME, Art Department, Carl Cox, Darius Syrossian, Dennis Ferrer, Guti, Hot Since 82, Mind Against, My Nu Leng & Dread MC, Skream, more
easternelectrics.com

Brussels Summer
8/6-15 // Brussels, Belgium
Pet Shop Boys, Puggy, Jain, Feist, Orbital, La Femme, Goose, Trust, Henri PFR, more bsf.be/en

Øya
8/8-12 // Oslo, Norway
Pixies, Young Thug, Ryan Adams, Angel Olsen, The Shins, The xx, BADBADNOTGOOD, Car Seat Headrest, Cashmere Cat, Charlotte Dos Santos, more
oyafestivalen.no/en

Brutal Assault
8/9-12 // Jaromer, Czech Republic
Amorphis, August Burns Red, Batushka, Chelsea Grin, Decapitated, Deserted Fear, Electric Wizard, Eluveitie, Emperor, more
brutalassault.cz/en

Boardmasters
8/9-13 // Cornwall, United Kingdom
Two Door Cinema Club, Jamiroquai, alt-J, The Flaming Lips, Andy C, Jake Bugg, Slaves, Patrick Topping, Wild Beasts, Roger Sanchez, more
boardmasters.co.uk

Sziget
8/9-16 // Budapest, Hungary
Kasabian, Major Lazer, P!nk, Wiz Khalifa, Flume, PJ Harvey, alt-J, Rita Ora, Interpol, more
szigetfestival.com

Into The Factory
8/10-12 // Stora Vika, Sweden
Adam Beyer, Barac, Daniel Avery, Fabio & Stef, Genius of Time, La Fleur, Magda, Nastia, Tijana T, Veronica Vasicka, Molly, more
musicgoesfurther.com

Lake
8/10-12 // Unterpremstäten, Austria
Marshmello, Steve Aoki, Timmy Trumpet, Selecta, Coone, Ciplo, Gunz for Hire, Radical

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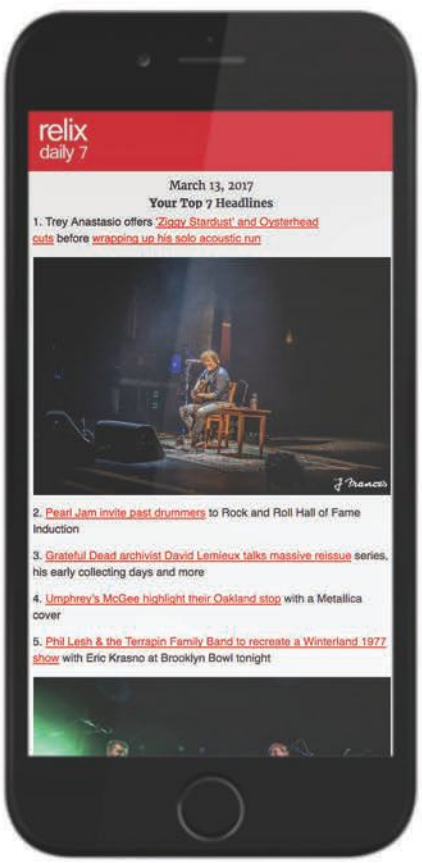
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defected.com/croatia

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wecandance.be

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frequency.at

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8/16-19 // Übersee, Germany
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8/16-19 // Paredes de Coura, Portugal
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paredesdecoura.com

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8/16-19 // Kiewit, Belgium
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Summer Breeze
8/16-19 // Dinkelsbühl, Germany
Amon Amarth, Amorphis, Chelsea Grin, Delain, Der Weg Einer Freiheit, Hatebreed, Megadeth, Obituary, Primal Fear, more
summer-breeze.de/en

Pstereo
8/17-19 // Trondheim, Norway
alt-J, Sonny Alven, Cymbals Eat Guitars, Slaves, The Bronx, Fantastic Negrito, Shame, Fireside, Janove, Phantogram, more
pstereo.no/english

Green Man
8/17-20 // Brecon Beacons, United Kingdom
PJ Harvey, Ryan Adams, Future Islands, Michael Kiwanuka, BADBADNOTGOOD, Fionn Regan, Richard Dawson, Sunflower Bean, more greenman.net

La Route Du Rock
8/17-20 // Saint-Jouan-des-Guérets, France
Interpol, The Jesus and Mary Chain, PJ Harvey, DJ Shadow, Mac DeMarco, Ty Segall, Temples, Angel Olsen, The Orwells, more
laroutedurock.com/en

Open Air Gampel
8/17-20 // Gampel-Bratsch, Switzerland
Lil Wayne, Die Toten Hosen, Paul Kalkbrenner, CRO, Torey Lanez, The Pretty Reckless, Walking On Cars, Lady Leshurr, more
openairgampel.ch

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8/17-20 // Brownsville, OR
Thomas Rhett, Dierks Bentley, Keith Urban, Zac Brown Band, Kip Moore, Randy Houser, Billy Currington, Parmalee, High Valley, more
willamettecountrymusicfestival.com

Oregon Eclipse
8/17-23 // Antelope, OR
Bassnectar, The String Cheese Incident, STS9, Papadosio, The Polish Ambassador, Moon Hooch, more
oregoneclipse2017.com

Beautiful Days
8/18-20 // Ottery Saint Mary, United Kingdom
Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott, Levellers, Frank Turner & the Sleeping Souls, Alison Moyet, Turin Brakes, Kila, Moon Hooch, more
beautifuldays.org

Country Thunder Alberta
8/18-20 // Calgary, Canada
Brad Paisley, Blake Shelton, Thomas Rhett, Randy Houser, Dallas Smith, Old Dominion, Chase Bryant, James Barker Band, more
countrythunder.com

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8/18-20 // Fayetteville, AR
The Wood Brothers, John Paul White, Smokey & The Mirror, Dead Man Winter, Elephant Revival, Iron & Wine, Mandolin Orange, The Brother Brothers, more
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LOCKN'

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UMPHREY'S McGEE	GOV'T MULE W/SPECIAL GUEST	JOHN FOGERTY	phil.moe. PHIL LESH & FRIENDS W/ moe.
THE STRING CHEESE INCIDENT	PHIL LESH & THE TERRAPIN FAMILY BAND	JOHN BUTLER TRIO	moe.
UMPHREY'S McGEE	GOV'T MULE	GREENSKY BLUEGRASS	THE REVIVALISTS
	BRANDI CARLILE	KELLER WILLIAMS	MARGO PRICE
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	BLACKBERRY SMOKE		

BLUE RIDGE BOWL AFTER

THE DISCO BISCUITS	JOE RUSSO'S ALMOST DEAD	JOE RUSSO'S ALMOST DEAD

BLUE RIDGE BOWL BEFORE

	ANTIBALAS	PIGEONS PLAYING PING PONG	DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND
	TAUK	HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER	ERIC KRASNO BAND
	SINKANE	THE SUFFERS	MOONALICE
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Lowlands
8/18-20 // Biddinghuizen, Netherlands
Mumford & Sons, The xx, Editors, alt-J, Bastille, Cypress Hill, Elbow, Flume, Iggy Pop, more lowlands.nl

MS Dockville
8/18-20 // Hamburg, Germany
Flume, Glass Animals, Tommy Cash, Moderat, Oh Wonder, Maxim, What So Not, Monolink, DJ Boring, Roosevelt, more msdockville.de

Rocky Mountain Folks
8/18-20 // Lyons, CO
Dave Rawlings, Gregory Alan Isakov, The Revivalists, Lake Street Dive, Josh Ritter, Rhiannon Giddens, The Wailin' Jennys, The Weepies, Peter Himmelman, more bluegrass.com

Hot August
8/19 // Cockeysville, MD
Old Crow Medicine Show, The Infamous Stringdusters, Lettuce, Turkuaz, Cabinet, The Dustbowl Revival, Baskery, Electric Love Machine, John Mooney & Bluesiana, more hotaugustmusicfestival.com

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8/19 // Omaha, NE
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8/20-24 // Pag, Croatia
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8/22-27 // Montreal, Canada
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Lockn' R
8/24-27 // Arrington, VA
The String Cheese Incident, Phil Lesh & The Terrapin Family Band with special guest Bob Weir, Widespread Panic, The Avett Brothers, Umphrey's McGee, Gov't Mule, John Fogerty, John Butler Trio, moe., more locknfestival.com

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8/25-26 // Black Mountain, NC
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8/26 // Lexington, KY
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Mysteryland Netherlands
8/26-27 // LZ Hoofddorp, Netherlands
Deadmau5, Alesso, Alok, Hannah Wants, Kshmr, Benny Rodrigues, Oliver Heldens, Chocolate Puma, Cleavage, more mysteryland.com

Project Pabst
8/26-27 // Portland, OR
Iggy Pop, Father John Misty, Die Antwoord, Beck, Nas, Spoon, Whitney, White Reaper, San Fermin, FIDLAR, more portland.projectpabst.com

Electric Fields
9/1-2 // Galloway, United Kingdom
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Bumbershoot
9/1-3 // Seattle, WA
Lorde, Flume, Odesza, Weezer, HAIM, Solange, Spoon, Conor Oberst, The Roots, Big Sean, Joseph, Moon Duo, more bumbershoot.com

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9/1-3 // Co. Laois, Ireland
The xx, A Tribe Called Quest, Duran Duran, Madness, Annie Mac, The Pretenders, Rag'n'bone Man, The Divine Comedy, Band of Horses, more electricpicnic.ie

Electric Zoo
9/1-3 // New York, NY
Above & Beyond, Deadmau5 & Eric Prydz, Excision, Tchami, Drezo, DJ Snake, Audien, Drezo, Claptone, Don Diablo, more electriczoofestival.com

JAS Labor Day Experience R
9/1-3 // Snowmass Village, CO
Lake Street Drive, The Roots, Maroon 5, Keith Urban, Daryl Hall & John Oates, Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats, St. Paul & The Broken Bones, more jazzaspensnowmass.org

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On Another OCEAN

Fleet Foxes return to redefine what it means to be a folk band in the 21st century.

BY MIKE GREENHAUS

IT'S A MILD, EARLY SPRING afternoon in Seattle, and Fleet Foxes have officially returned. For the first time since auteur Robin Pecknold quietly left the music industry and enrolled in an undergraduate program at Columbia University, the entire band has reconvened in their hometown with the goal of bringing the songs off their forthcoming third LP, *Crack-Up,* to life. Fleet Foxes haven't played a concert in over five years and, these days, the band's core members are spread out between New York, Seattle and Los Angeles. But, as they piece their catalog back together and slot songs into their setlist, Fleet Foxes' full-band feel has started to come back into focus.

Pecknold was initially worried about whipping the songs off of *Crack-Up* into shape for the stage. Though rooted in the acoustic, harmony-laced bliss that's been the band's calling card for more than a decade, *Crack-Up* finds the five-person ensemble widening their angelic indie-folk sound to include new, colorful art-rock shades. Pecknold and band co-founder Skyler Skjelset compiled an arrangement book in advance of the rehearsals, taking their best guesses at who would be playing which parts live; keyboardist Casey Wescott went a step further, using Pro Tools files from the *Crack-Up* sessions to make track stems for his bandmates to study, articulating the individual parts. Everyone did their homework and, to Skjelset's surprise, by the end of their 12-day practice period, Fleet Foxes were staging back-to-back dress rehearsals.

"We're finding new ways to bridge the new and the old," the methodical Pecknold says during a break between rehearsals the day after his 31st birthday. "We're working on these five-to-eight song sections, so there's constant music for most of the set. If we try and play a song from the first album and then play a song from this album, they just feel like they're from a different place, so we have to throw a song from the second album in to bridge the gap. Then I can hear the commonalities and the differences more clearly."

In a few days, Pecknold will head overseas to promote *Crack-Up* in Europe, after which he'll reconvene with Skjelset, Wescott, multi-instrumentalists Christian Wargo and Morgan Henderson and touring drummer Matt Barrick to hit the road for a world tour. They'll mix headlining dates at marquee under-the-stars spaces with prime festival slots and the occasional pairing, including a H.O.R.D.E.-like meeting-of-the-minds with Animal Collective. Though they've slipped back into the system booking-wise, the elephant in the room is that Pecknold pulled off one of the most impressive disappearing acts of the social media era: Like Rivers Cuomo two decades earlier, he brushed aside critical acclaim and hipster cred to pursue an undergraduate degree.

> "We definitely spent some time apart—Robin needed a break from the whole [Fleet Foxes] thing in order to get exploratory, and it was important to do that independently from each other." SKYLER SKJELSET

And, despite living in New York City, Pecknold removed himself almost entirely from the indie-folk live scene that he helped shepherd from clubs to massive festival stages and suburban malls. All of his bandmates continued to create music during that pause, though the most visible member of the Fleet Foxes family was undoubtedly former drummer Josh Tillman, who succeeded with his Andy Kaufman-esque transformation into Father John Misty—a Tony Clifton-like commentary on pop culture and the over-earnest singer-songwriter scene.

"We definitely spent some time apart—Robin needed a break from the whole [Fleet Foxes] thing in order to get exploratory, and it was important to do that independently from each other," Skjelset says from his home in New York a few weeks after the Seattle rehearsals. "We haven't seen each other as much for the past five years. We'd kick it here and there, but it wasn't much of an active relationship."

Though Fleet Foxes never actually broke up, *Crack-Up* feels like a reunion record. It picks up where their previous album, *Helplessness Blues*, left off, with its denser, more fully realized soundscapes, and places Pecknold and his bandmates a few stops down the road. A culmination of the individual members' musical explorations, the album also makes use of the studio in new, exciting ways; the group employed a small army of auxiliary musicians to flesh out their chamber-pop arrangements, including string and woodwind players. Instead of just replacing Tillman, a number of drummers sit behind the kit (including Barrick, on loan from The Walkmen, who are currently on hiatus). Fleet Foxes showed their might as multitaskers throughout the sessions and, with *Crack-Up*, it's fully apparent that they are no longer a traditional rock group, where each musician is confined to one instrument. That also means Pecknold needed to deconstruct his ornate compositions before they were finally ready to enter his set.

"They're more real to me now that we're letting them loose—and it's very loud and very expansive-sounding so far," he says. "Now, I'm in this ambassador mode for my own musician self. And when I get time to write music again, I'll be in a different mode. There are times where I've wondered: 'Should writing the music I love be my job?' But it's not really my *job*. I wrote music the entire time I was in school and, if I never put a record out again, I would still work on songs. It just feels natural to me."

* * *

FLEET FOXES OFFICIALLY FORMED in 2006, but really grew out of Pecknold and Skjelset's friendship and bond over classic songwriters like Bob Dylan and Neil Young. Skjelset describes their families as "just around each other" for as long as he can remember. Their siblings were even classmates. While high-school students outside of Seattle in Kirkland, Wash., they started writing songs and playing coffee shops. Pecknold, who has recorded solo EPs since his teens, eventually dropped out of school and started working at the Cha Cha, a restaurant that served as an independent-music hub. He immersed himself in the area scene and started seeing shows as often as possible; the first incarnation of Fleet Foxes, which included Wescott, grew out of their local community. "It was mainly: 'Oh, wait, my friend is into *this* and he's really good at *that*, so maybe he should play with us,'" Skjelset says of the band's natural, early evolution.

Veteran Seattle producer Phil Ek, known for sweetening records by kindred spirits Band of Horses and The Shins, was an early supporter. After hearing about Fleet Foxes through Pecknold's sister—who has managed the band since their infancy—Ek worked on their first DIY EP. And, when

"Broadcasting folksiness" off the quad: Henderson, Wescott, Pecknold, Skjelset, Wargo (l-r)

Shawn Brackbill

they signed with Sub Pop and Bella Union, he sat at the helm for both Fleet Foxes' 2008 pilot EP, *Sun Giant,* and their full-length, self-titled breakthrough, which dropped in time for that year's festival season. Soon, the band's best-known lineup took shape: Their rehearsal-space roomie Wargo (of the Los Angeles indie-pop group Crystal Skulls) signed on, while Tillman, who already had five EPs under his own name and was dating Pecknold's sister at the time, moved behind the kit.

Fleet Foxes were a hit at SXSW 2008 and spent the early part of the year touring with Blitzen Trapper, who brought the Pacific Northwest act to packed rooms in major markets like New York and Chicago. Skjelset considers the time a blur—their opening spot at Bowery Ballroom was actually the first time some band members had set foot in New York. Serving as something of a meeting point between the era's roots-rock revival and the concurrent surge of increasingly baroque indie singer-songwriters, singles "White Winter Hymnal" and "He Doesn't Know Why" were instant classics. The *Fleet Foxes* LP was eventually certified gold.

The quintet spent the next two years on the road, quickly moving up the club ranks into sizable ballrooms and theaters. The group's "classic lineup," which now included Henderson, released their lone LP together, *Helplessness Blues*, in 2011. Though still a folk album, *Helplessness Blues* had an overarching darker sound and a more groove-oriented approach. Pecknold—who had weathered a breakup around the time and has struggled with social anxiety over the years—is credited with writing all of the album's tracks, while Wescott took charge with some of the harmonies. Despite being his first album with the band, Tillman fully integrated himself; his voice blended beautifully with fellow singers Pecknold and Wargo.

Helplessness Blues cemented Fleet Foxes' reputation as a career act and even earned a Grammy nomination, but life on the road started to show its wear. They continued supporting the album into early 2012, but, just before that run wrapped up, Tillman announced that he planned to leave Fleet Foxes when they returned home. His farewell message stated, "Back into the gaping maw of obscurity I go...Sorry if I was distant and obtuse if we ever met. Have fun."

One of the band's most outgoing onstage personalities, Tillman continued releasing solo albums during his Fleet Foxes tenure and supporting those records on the road, causing him to be away from his bandmates for stretches of time. ("The cycle has been: Fleet Foxes record, my record, Fleet Foxes record, my record," he said in 2009.) He also appeared to be in the midst of an existential crisis. However, Tillman managed to skip "obscurity," re-emerging a few months after posting his goodbye message with the fully realized, self-aware second persona Father John Misty.

Pecknold says his relationship with Tillman had soured over the years and freely admits that he, himself, wasn't always the easiest to work with in the studio. The singer was also questioning his decision to spend the rest of his life grinding it out on the road. "It's not like the band would ever break up because it doesn't need to, it's not that kind of situation, but we were all sucking it up in touring that album," Pecknold says. "We had a two-record deal with Sub Pop and Bella Union and, at the first meeting we had about *Helplessness Blues* with Sub Pop, I was like, 'This is the last one for a while,' because we were pretty burnt out. Our dynamic wasn't great, and I was curious about other stuff, like school and traveling. We weren't suffering through it, but we definitely saw touring *Helplessness Blues* as the end of that chapter for everybody. Then we would take a minute and re-approach it at some point. That was the plan all along. It wasn't something that happened out of nowhere."

Skjelset remembers Pecknold first broaching the idea of going back to school during the *Helplessness Blues* outing but, in 2013, they reconvened with Henderson to start working on a new record. Ultimately, they struggled to get into a proper creative zone and the sessions were mostly scrapped; the singer applied to Columbia and enrolled as an undergraduate student.

"I thought, 'Let's just skip the bad album—the third album no one liked. Let's wait and the next one will be good,'" Pecknold says with a laugh, before adding more seriously, "but also, I'm conscious of the fact that I'm gonna die, and I'd like to have a broad range of experiences. I've never given college a shot, and I really admire people who have." He also used the time to reinvent himself physically, changing his style of dress and even shaving his once iconic, shaggy hair. "There were times when people would say, 'Hey, I like your band,' or would help me navigate signing up for classes, or planning my schedule or helping me when I was totally in the weeds with schoolwork," Pecknold says. "But I wasn't broadcasting folksiness on the quad."

All of Fleet Foxes' members spread their wings during the break. Wargo toured with a reconfigured Crystal Skulls and, along with Wescott, gigged as Poor Moon; Henderson divided his time between folk act The Cave Singers, post-punk band Past Lives and session work; Skjelset, who says he followed a natural path from Sonic Youth to Nels Cline and other "out" sounds, released experimental solo records under his own name. And

Pecknold, pictured with the best-known Fleet Foxes lineup, admits that he has been a "dictator" while recording past studio albums.

despite also living in the Big Apple, the guitarist gave Pecknold his space.

"Robin and I needed a break from each other because we've been friends since junior high," Skjelset says. "Not in a bad way, just in a necessary way. If you get together with someone that you've been with since you were 12 years old, it's like, what do you talk about at a certain point? All of your experiences are always the same."

Skjelset says he was surprised how long their break lasted, but adds that Fleet Foxes were "feeling pretty tired" by the time they slowed down in 2012. "There was something very un-music for Robin [about the group's touring/promotional regime]," he explains. "He thought, 'I've been doing music every single day of my life since I was 14 years old; here's another thing that I could do.'

"It ended up being really good for all of us to explore new things and even just live life," Skjelset continues. "Your music is reflective of your experiences—if you're only living on a tour bus and you're only seeing the inside of venues, it's hard to have something to feel impassioned about. You get stale, dry. It also gave us all an opportunity to be humans again for a little while and feel things, see things and take things away from that."

* * *

THE FLEET FOXES RUMOR MILL began to stir in late 2015 when Pecknold dipped his head above water and announced some support dates for harpist Joanna Newsom. Performing as a solo acoustic act, he used the opportunity to try out some new Fleet Foxes tunes and, soon after, started working on the collection of songs that would eventually become *Crack-Up*. Though he originally hoped to complete his coursework before Fleet Foxes regrouped, Pecknold took a sabbatical. "It was partially that Joanna asked me to do that tour, and then I was like, 'OK, I might as well take the semester off.'" The experience bled into Fleet Foxes' next act.

Skjelset says that, in late 2015, Pecknold called him "out of the blue and brought it up" while he was on the road. They talked further about a potential album's vibe when he returned to New York and, Skyler says, discussed "what was important and what we could get from getting back together—all the reasons you would want to have a band instead of doing your own thing."

Pecknold had continued to write while he was at Columbia—mostly at night, on the weekends and during vacations—but it wasn't until the spring of 2016 that he started combing through his ideas and figuring out which songs felt like spiritual siblings. The members of Fleet Foxes reconvened that summer to demo their new material and started recording this past fall. They guesstimate that they only took four days off between Thanksgiving and early 2017, laying down material across the country.

"The band has a lot of themes, these pillars, so we really wanted to make sure the bones were supported and represented, but we also wanted to make it exciting for us, as people who are making the music," Skjelset says. "We never had the opportunity to deal with those interests. That was part of the conversation: 'We don't want another record that is exactly like the last ones, and here's these things that we're interested in.' And, as separated as Robin and I were for a while, he was listening to my music and I was listening to his, so there was an interest in making sure, on both sides, those things found their way into the writing and the production of the music." (Pecknold also used his time away from Fleet Foxes to write an Off-Broadway score and says he is working toward a solo album as well.)

Fleet Foxes quickly realized that vocals were their true signature. Pecknold still considers their harmonies to be their central hook, and Skjelset praises his bandmate's ability to use his voice as an instrument. Besides that, Fleet Foxes' sound could be a blank canvas.

"I'll have these little, happy accidents after I write, when we'll fit one idea into something else; it will end up as a bridge, and I'll realize, 'That's why I wrote that,'" Pecknold says. "It feels like excavating a dinosaur's skeleton and you have all these pieces lying around, and you discover how they all fit together once you've written them or found them all."

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CRACK-UP'S INVOCATION, "I AM All That I Need/Arroyo Seco/Thumbprint Scar," opens with some familiar gentle acoustic-guitar work and haunting vocals before suddenly blasting off into a more fully orchestrated romp, full of quick, unexpected changes and sweeping string suites. The track, like the album in general, feels both familiar and fresh. The group's tight harmonies and rootsy hallmarks remain—Skjelset points out that there's more acoustic guitar than most people realize—and Pecknold's words and timbre still recall pastoral images and "Scarborough Fair" mysticism. New textures are apparent on each song and the group reinterpreted their roles as instrumentalists. Fleet Foxes' overall results inch away from the traditional guitar/bass/drum/piano format. The string and piano interlude of "Cassius" could have a second life in an orchestral setting.

They looked to some non-musical influences too, crafting *Crack-Up* like a nonlinear Nicolas Roeg film. "Kept Woman" peaks during a gorgeous piano segment while "Mearcstapa" embraces a sometimes jazzy, pulsating Radiohead-style beat. Elsewhere, the band sprinkles in Gnawa guitar tunings, Ethiopian flavors culled from the Éthiopiques compilations, elements of Ry Cooder's scene-setting music on the *Paris, Texas* soundtrack and shades of Stravinsky's pulsating works. Fleet Foxes update the classic sound they helped patent, too—the nine-minute jamband-approved "Third of May/Ōdaigahara" revisits the outfit's welcome, CSN harmonies. (One song from those 2013 sessions, "I Should See Memphis," ended up on *Crack-Up*.)

The members of the group also invited a slew of friends to contribute to the sessions, as Pecknold says, "giving the record this new color from outside sources." He credits his introductory music-theory classes at Columbia with helping him expand his scope and ability to communicate with his string and horn accompanists. Likewise, he says he looked at the vacant drum seat like strings that could take on various roles at different points. While they've crafted some definitive pop songs, the members of Fleet Foxes consider themselves exploratory musicians at heart. The break allowed the band to reevaluate their first two records and figure out new ways to avoid being pigeonholed.

Though crafted somewhat nomadically, *Crack-Up* will also be remembered as Fleet Foxes' "New York record," because of the time they spent tracking at Electric Lady and due to the founding members' recent big city adventures.

"New York can be a very hard place to live—my first year, I would get sick all the time, just from the new germs that were in the subway or on the street and adjusting from the Pacific Northwest. It felt like facing a certain reality," Pecknold says. "But in the last two years of living here, I haven't gotten sick once. I adjusted, rose to the occasion of what it takes to assert yourself in that city, and that was rewarding. Living in New York prepared me to face hardship with an expectation that you can get through it or that it will pass. There's no way I could have gotten through working on this album for six months with so little time off without that stamina, that grit."

Pecknold likens the record's opening number to the feel of zipping around New York City, moving between divergent environments like a skyscraper and the seashore within minutes. "You're going from internal to external, or psychological to physical, on a dime," he says. "And then there's 'On Another Ocean,' the first half of that is melodramatic, and then the second half is really sunny. That's like New York in January and June."

The recording process also reaffirmed Pecknold and Skjelset's commitment to being part of an ensemble. They produced the album together, while Ek provided the mix. Pecknold's vision still guided the sessions, but he also made sure that there was room for his bandmates. "In the past, I was more of a dictator about how it needed to be," Pecknold admits. "It was so strictly melodic, and I was writing all of those melodies. I'd go, 'There's this part and that part, play it.' There was still some of that on this one, but there was more room for everyone's strengths. It boiled down to Skyler and I co-producing the album. We worked most directly together on it so, if there was a guitar line that I had, I would just play it, and if there was a guitar thing he had, he would do it. But, a lot of what he brought to the table was really textural and these production ideas—the stuff that he had been exploring in the music he'd been making since we stopped.

"Personally, for me and Skye, we just had a really great time recording each other," he continues. "It just helps having established separate identities outside of the bubble of the band. We've come into it more as individuals—that we're making this choice, rather than people who are codependent."

Pecknold's new approach has allowed each of the band members to bring a little more of their identities into Fleet Foxes; he singles out Wescott's piano textures and codings, Henderson's instrumental range and Wargo's voice (as well as his bass and drum work), while describing his new spin on their trademark sound. The break also allowed Pecknold to departmentalize his responsibilities as an artist and entertainer and consider his career choice.

"Going back to school was a fact-finding mission to see if something else would resonate—I have a pretty clear separation in my mind of the different hats that you have to wear in putting out music as a professional for public consumption," he says. "Now, I feel like I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing while I'm writing a song. I'm comfortable with making music, and I'm comfortable with releasing music, for the time being. Maybe when I'm 50 and I can't sing these songs anymore or I don't want to tour, I'll try something. But, I don't know—I'm not there yet, so we'll see."

REVIEWS

Compiled by MIKE GREENHAUS

Gov't Mule

GOV'T MULE

Revolution Come...Revolution Go FANTASY

Gov't Mule began recording their 10th LP on Election Day 2016—a pivotal date for both America and the band itself. With the country divided into social and political extremes, **Warren Haynes** and company were inspired to capture the moment, and the most thrilling tracks on *Revolution Come...Revolution Go* harness today's urgency. "Stone Cold Rage" opens the album with a firestorm of wah-wah-driven hard-funk, Haynes wailing about martyrdom and an indefinable unease "spreading out like water." The guitarist blasts "cartoon saviors" over the pummeling, psychedelic riffs of "Drawn That Way;" meanwhile, the shapeshifting title-track seemingly alludes to President Trump, as Haynes rants against a "new master riding in on a white horse/ All the new kings with their feet of clay/ Lying to the people about some new deal." Even when Haynes' peace-and-love platitudes land a bit on the nose (slow-burning, soul tune "Pressure Under Fire"), the group sounds invigorated preaching brotherhood in an intolerant age. While Gov't Mule have always thrived on their virtuoso instrumental attack, Haynes' lyrics prove to be more crucial than usual this time around. The record's weakest cuts, mostly chunked in the LP's middle third, downplay full band fluidity in favor of singer-songwriter-style R&B and folk: "The Man I Want to Be" is a frustratingly generic love song with Haynes belting clichés ("They say absence makes the heart grow fonder/I don't know if that's true") faster than his densest guitar solos; then there's "Traveling Tune," a plodding on-the-road ditty about wisdom gleaned from a tour bus. ("Just another highway song," he sings to open the track, outlining everything you need to know.) On these by-numbers cuts, the other mighty Mule members (drummer **Matt Abts**, keyboardist **Danny Louis**, bassist **Jorgen Carlsson**) sound more like a backing band than equal contributors—a problem for a quartet defined by interplay. Luckily, these lightweight moments are offset by some of their most incendiary tunes to date. The centerpiece is "Thorns of Life," a nine-minute powerhouse that builds from a Pink Floyd-styled atmosphere to a barn-burning Southern rock guitar solo. At its most resonant, *Revolution Come...Revolution Go* offers both escapism and a call to action. ***Ryan Reed***

Jacob Blickenstaff

Fleet Foxes

Crack-Up NONESUCH

On the first two Fleet Foxes LPs, bandleader **Robin Pecknold** displayed a meticulousness that's rare in indie-rock or folk—or any music, really. Every note was groomed to perfection, with songs constructed around billowing vocal harmonies that recalled Crosby, Stills & Nash—not in timbre, but in the way those voices snapped together like pieces of vinyl flooring. But it's been six years since the band's last album, the acclaimed *Helplessness Blues*, and a lot's changed in the interim: Pecknold took time off to attend Columbia University, and drummer Josh Tillman fled to form his own, equally massive solo project, Father John Misty. Given that real-life context, the title of their new record feels worrying: Who cracked up and why? The messy opening seconds of "I Am All That I Need/Arroyo Seco/Thumbprint Scar" don't ease those concerns: Pecknold croons in a low quiver, halfway in tune and barely audible, as his trademark harmonies struggle to merge into sync. That jarring presentation feels purposeful, a line in the sand. Much of *Crack-Up* is similarly raw, and often downright weird: The churning "Cassius" opens in an ambient atmosphere anchored by the looped sound of waves in a stream; abstract jazz-folk reverie "On Another Ocean (January/June)" fizzles out with several seconds of wailing saxophone. Still, no matter how much he experiments, Pecknold can't completely run away from his obvious strengths. The album's most stirring moments are those trademark vocal blasts (epic "Third of May/Odaigahara"), bundled like summer flower bouquets.

Ryan Reed

North Mississippi Allstars

Prayer for Peace LEGACY

Celebrating two decades as a band, *Prayer for Peace* consolidates the **North Mississippi Allstars'** place as traditional American music makers. Sons of Memphis session-legend Jim Dickinson, guitarist **Luther** and drummer **Cody Dickinson** keep on truckin' down the greasy Southern rock highway. *Prayer for Peace* is built for boogie. On their first album completely without founding bassist Chris Chew, the band continues to occupy a vaguely hippie-fried space, fuzzed-out blues route, perfect for a good old-fashioned stomp. Drawing on the same sources that Jack White turned into a career with the White Stripes, the Allstars were born into it and continue to carry the tradition in their own way. Where earlier albums like *Electric Blue Watermelon* found the band's sound expanding into the present day, *Prayer for Peace* feels largely like a conservative musical step for the brothers. Only in a few places does the group's over-saturation sound like music made in the 21st century, like the delicious chopping overdrive of R.L. Burnside's "Long Haired Doney," the would-be protest anthem "Need to Be Free" and an inventively sparse reimagining of Mississippi Fred McDowell's "You Got to Move" that unfortunately gets jettisoned after a 30-second introduction. Like the pepped-up, jug-band standards "Stealin'" and "Deep Elum" and the blues tunes "You Got to Move" and "61 Highway," much feels largely drawn from an old repertoire of perfectly excellent songs that have been played with perfect excellence before. The North Mississippi Allstars play it all well enough, but seem more concerned with reiterating standards than blazing new trails. But maybe things in North Mississippi are just fine the way they are. ***Jesse Jarnow***

Gorillaz

Humanz WARNER BROS.

By creating **Gorillaz**, his virtual band project with comic-book artist **Jamie Hewlett**, **Damon Albarn** pulled off an unprecedented disappearing act. It's an enviable position for a major pop star: When you make cartoon characters do all the publicity, you're free to indulge any sonic whim you choose. But with *Humanz*, the group's fifth LP, the eclectic frontman has retreated to near-invisibility. Collaboration has always been part of the Gorillaz game plan—Danger Mouse was producer and co-writer on 2005's *Demon Days*, and 2010 follow-up *Plastic Beach* was crammed full of high-profile guest stars. *Humanz*, however, plays like a mixtape more than a proper album, with Albarn a reluctant ringleader. "Ascension" opens the LP with a visceral verse from rapper **Vince Staples**, who begs listeners to "drop that ass" with armageddon on the horizon. It's a thrilling apocalyptic party—and the song already feels finished by the time Albarn pops in for a too-brief cameo, delivered in his trademark megaphone fidelity. The guest list swells from there to an absurd degree: Reggaeton vocalist **Popcaan** adds his grating auto-tuned raving to "Saturnz Barz;" **De La Soul** follow their iconic "D.A.R.E." appearance with a rambunctious spot on hangover celebration "Momentz;" **Mavis Staples** flaunts her soulful croon on "Let Me Out," a slice of gritty hip-hop/jazz. But besides Staples' blistering opening gambit, these vignettes feel like forced mash-ups—and worse, none of the individual pieces fit together cohesively. The album's definitive high point is "Andromeda," a space-disco banger full of milky dub grooves and Kraftwerk-style keys. You'll never guess who handles the lead vocal.

Ryan Reed

Dispatch

America, Location 12 BOMBER

Of the jam-lite, college-rock bands that cropped up in the '90s (think: Guster, O.A.R., G. Love & Special Sauce), **Dispatch** would be a dark horse pick for having the strongest act two decades on. But here we are in 2017, and the band's latest album, *America, Location 12*, is an infinitely enjoyable campfire collection of harmony-laden jewels. *America* is Dispatch's first album since 2012's solid, if unmemorable, *Circles Around the Sun*—and in that album's failings, this one shines. The choruses of these 11 tracks spark to life, twirling deep into your memory; expect to catch yourself humming at inopportune times.

First single "Only the Wild Ones" finds Dispatch perfecting their original formula: wind-swept harmonies that ebb and flow with lyrics about having "no place to go but everywhere," over minimal percussion and a gently funky guitar line. The song builds with the organic feel of a growing party—before you know it, you're dancing with a drink in hand. Additional tunes like "Ghost Town" and "Curse + Crush" (with its instant earworm, "We fight, and we fuck, and we make up") nail the vibe that defined Dispatch's biggest cult favorite, "The General"—gorgeous, smile-inducing little sing-alongs made for friends, but irresistible enough for just you. Elsewhere, Dispatch turns up without losing their earthy warmth. Churning rocker "Skin the Rabbit" generates heat with a lumbering groove and a jigsaw-puzzle melody; album closer "Atticus Cobain" whips up garage-rock riffing and bluesy piano into what should be rock-radio gold.

Justin Jacobs

alt-J

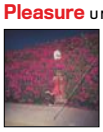
Relaxer CANVASBACK

If there is something consistent about **alt-J**, then it's that they aren't interested in consistency. Each song—and, in fact, each sound—that emerges from the British rock group feels surprising and wholly unpredictable. That was true on their 2012 debut and their 2014 effort *This Is All Yours*, which brought us angular hits like "Left Hand Free" and "Every Other Freckle." And it's true here on the band's third album, a collection of songs—again produced by **Charlie Andrew**—that feels somehow more introspective and heady than their prior efforts. Opener "3WW" is restrained and quiet, luring the listener in with an initial sense of calm. The following seven tracks (there are only eight in total) pace themselves slowly and carefully, often retaining this measured calm throughout. "House of the Rising Sun" is so stark in its orchestration that it almost feels like something is missing. That hushed feeling is juxtaposed with numbers like punk-tinged "Hit Me Like That Snare" and rocker "Deadcrush" but, for the most part, *Relaxer*'s overall aesthetic is signified in its title. These are low-key song built around atmosphere rather than hooks, which may feel jarring to fans of alt-J's radio singles. Funky single "In Cold Blood" is technically the lead track here, but it's a bit misleading for what's to come. *Relaxer* is about paring it all back, about stripping everything away. The result is often lovely, especially on dulcet number "Last Year," and it all comes out of left field. alt-J may not be interested in giving you what you expect, but they will give you what they think you need. ***Emily Zemler***

Gorillaz

Feist

Pleasure UNIVERSAL



Feist opens her fifth LP in a meditative calm, crooning in a trebly half-whisper. Later, "Pleasure" erupts with mountain of background noise and ragged, grungey distortion that may have well been recorded using a child's amplifier and computer microphone. Since 2007's *The Reminder*, the album that exposed her music to soccer moms and hipsters alike, via iPod campaign singalong "1234," the singer's been teetering between these two extremes: airy sweetness and abrasive ugliness. That lo-fi, recorded-in-the-backyard approach felt organic on *The Reminder*—a reaction to the lavish studio polish of her acclaimed breakout LP, 2004's *Let It Die*. But on *Pleasure*, the earthiness is starting to grate. Many of these songs play more like ramshackle demos than finished products: Acoustic ballad "I Wish I Didn't Miss You" is marred by monstrous tape hiss that could easily be a running bathroom sink; on "Get Not High, Get Not Low," she fumbles around on a creaky guitar, as if barely able to press down the instrument's ancient strings. There's a raw intimacy here that many artists of Feist's stature would be too embarrassed to showcase, but using a raw approach isn't like waving a magic wand. Her most vivid material always digs deeper and reaches further, and that isn't an exception on *Pleasure*—whether it's the twinkling twilight vocal harmonies on "Lost Dream" or the eerie synth and spoken word of "Century." Feist's pure talent remains staggering, but her presentation is growing stale. ***Ryan Reed***

Bob Dylan

Triplicate COLUMBIA

Shadows in the Night, **Bob Dylan**'s 2015 release, was a revelation—crooning standards from the Great American Songbook, interpreting ballads associated with Frank Sinatra in a most heartfelt manner, it redrew not only the boundless potential of those songs but also, once again, our conception of Bob Dylan. Last year's *Fallen Angels* gave us more of the same. We knew that Dylan was absolutely serious about pursuing this vein of American music; this wasn't a lark for him. Though it was beautifully rendered, it didn't break new ground.

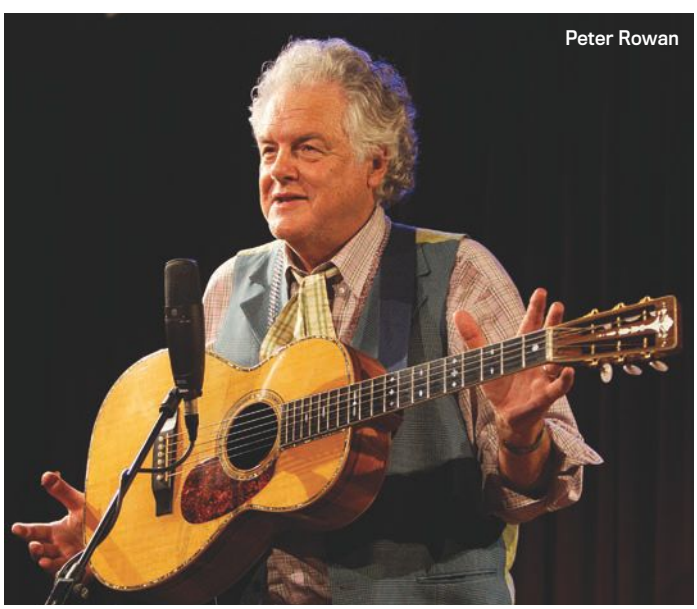
We now have *Triplicate*, Dylan's first-ever triple album of new recordings: 30 more songs from the same well that gave us the last two. As before, Dylan puts his heart and soul into it; when does he not? He is obviously in love with these compositions, as well he should be; they are timeless. But *Triplicate*, as enjoyable as it is, raises new questions: Is this the end of Bob Dylan as a songwriter? Never in his career has he gone this long without writing new songs, nor has he stayed on the same course for three (or is it five?) consecutive albums. Rod Stewart stopped at his fifth *Songbook* set, but will Dylan?

Those ponderings aside, *Triplicate* is reliably delicious. For those who don't find Dylan's current vocal style intolerable altogether, his attention to detail and his nuanced phrasings are as fine-tuned as ever. Accompanied once again by his regular small group, Dylan takes on familiar numbers such as "Stormy Weather," "Stardust" and "But Beautiful" with abundant relish. Most of the tracks stick to the balladic arrangements he's recently favored, but when he puts a little zip and swing into it, as he does on Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke's "Imagination," it's enough to make you want to take up ballroom dancing. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Ryan Montbleau

I Was Just Leaving SELF-RELEASED

I Was Just Leaving marks a change in direction for **Ryan Montbleau**—a solitary effort comprised of lonesome, melancholy ballads conveyed with little more than his fragile vocals, an acoustic guitar and occasional percussion. The downtrodden tone suggests that Montbleau is either bound up in reflection or simply returning to his roots as a solo troubadour who once frequented open-mic nights in his native Boston. Either way, these tunes are tailor-made to be played before an engaged audience, and songs such as "Never Stopped Loving You," "I Was Just Leaving," "Moving Too Fast" and "Running the Engine" convey a rare intimacy that was rarely emphasized in prior efforts. The tangled tones and brass on "Abigail" and the sing-along sway of "Cue the Majesty" suggest that he still retains a certain amount of spunk, even if the upturned attitude is only temporary. The yearning and sobriety that pervade the album overall may be best summed up by this snippet of lyric from "Together at Least (The Betterment Blues)": "Sometimes we sing the blues alone." Clearly, he appropriates that feeling here, and so it isn't surprising that Montbleau's restraint gives the entire set a forlorn feel and sense of deep desire. Consequently, *I Was Just Leaving* forces the listener to dig deep and give an attentive ear. There are many dispirited individuals sharing the planet these days and, in that respect, Montbleau can at least convey his sentiments with a knowing nod. *Lee Zimmerman*



Peter Rowan

Gary Clark Jr.

Live/North America 2016

WARNER BROS.

Gary Clark Jr.'s first live album—he simply called it *Live*—was released three years ago and was an absolute barn burner. So why not do it again? This second volume doesn't really bring anything new to the concept—what you hear is what they played, sans overdubs (although, for whatever reason, the credits don't mention where or when the gig took place)—but it does succeed in reinforcing the notion that these guys are best heard in action, in front of an audience. While Clark's studio releases have all been more than worthwhile, the singer/guitarist and his band—**King Zapata** (guitars), **Johnny Bradley** (bass/backing vocals) and **Johnny Radelat** (drums/backing vocals)—don't hold anything back when they perform live. There's a whole extra level or two of excitement and grit going on here. That's most evident on the tunes recycled from Clark's last studio set, 2015's *The Story of Sonny Boy Slim*. On that album, "Grinder," a Clark original, is given a near-metallic weightiness that likens it to an early Zeppelin track. Live, "Grinder" loses some of its fuzz and grunge, opting for a more swinging, soulful approach that better suits it. On the other hand, "Shake," which also originated on *Sonny Boy*, maintains its primal boogie-woogie beat in this live version (featuring a vocal turn from **Leon Bridges** as well as his saxophonist **Jeff Dazey**) but grows a scuzzy drone that's downright menacing. Throughout, of course, there's that mean-ass playing that put Gary Clark Jr. on the map in the first place—listen to him on Elmore James' "My Baby's Gone," all by his lonesome, and you can rest assured that blues guitar is alive and well. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Chris Robinson Brotherhood

Betty's Self-Rising Southern Blends, Vol. 3 SILVER ARROW

Hot, danceable and curated by **Betty Cantor-Jackson**, this 3-LP live set from the fall of 2015 features some of drummer **Tony Leone**'s first performances with the band, and some of bassist **Muddy Dutton**'s last. With this solid—if short-lived—backbone, **Chris Robinson Brotherhood** modulates among funk, Southern rock and soul flavors, and cosmic cowboy tunes, as well as between covers and their own complex numbers. The Black Crowes' "I Ain't Hiding" is a thumping disco track. Slim Harpo's "Got Love If You Want It" is spare and swampy; his "The Music's Hot" is cast here as a funk. The Brotherhood also put its groove on Leiber and Stoller's "I'm a Hog for You," Dylan's "She Belongs to Me" (here, it's blues-rock) and Lee Dorsey's "Get Out of My Life, Woman"—a wink to the Jerry Garcia Band. The old jukebox creates sonic context for the CRB tunes. "Clear Blue Sky & The Good Doctor" has an easy-rolling country groove, **Adam MacDougall**'s whistling synth melodies and an organismic meltdown, like poppies growing in a field; "Oak Apple Day" is a Northern California rolling-hills walking tune. This is cosmic California country. *New Earth Mud*'s "Ride," a CRB live staple, makes its first *Betty's Blends* appearance, a side-long funk cut in several modes. **Neal Casal** plays guitar hero across the album—his style is not flashy, but meaty. Though **Chris Robinson**'s rhythm guitar sometimes shadows MacDougall or Casal so closely that it's hard to pick out, his singing shines. (Listen to him in the right channel—on "Clear Blue Sky," strumming and picking a subtle texture around Casal's lead.) Belting or scatting, Robinson's the real deal—and his instrument gets deeper and deeper with time. *Richard B. Simon*

Peter Rowan

My Aloha! OMNIVORE

Long before the word Americana was applied to a genre of music, **Peter Rowan**'s music exemplified it, in his '70s work with The Rowan Brothers and Old and in the Way, and since then on countless solo albums and collaborations. (Those with Tony Rice and Flaco Jiménez come to mind.) Whether playing unadulterated bluegrass, cowboy tunes, old-timey string-band music or some personalized hybrid that shoots off in multiple directions, his plaintive vocals and considerable acoustic guitar skills have always been utilized to satisfying effect. For his latest effort, Rowan went into deep research mode, studying the roots and branches of Hawaiian song, connecting it to the folksong of the mainland and customizing it. Recording in Honolulu over an 18-month span, playing both guitar and a baritone ukulele, and accompanied by local musicians, Rowan wrote 11 austere and bewitching songs that bear the mark of the islands' native culture—presented with minimal fuss and embellishment—without giving up any of his familiar, homespun style. On the title track, slide guitars and Rowan's smooth tenor and trademark quasi-yodel tell the tale of an Appalachian sailor longing for his home and his love, while the opening cut, "My Blue Hula Girl," is an unadorned love tune for the song's protagonist, "dancing on the Waikiki shore." For the more uptempo "Uncle Jimmy," **Chris** and **Lorin Rowan**, Peter's two brothers

Ronald Rietman

and sometime bandmates, donate their harmony voices, and other numbers, among them "Sunny at Sunrise" and "The Waltz of Waikiki," capture the ethereality and somnolent pace of island life. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Leslie Mendelson

Love & Murder ROYAL POTATO FAMILY

It's been eight years since **Leslie Mendelson** released *Swan Feathers*, her previous solo album, and, during that time, the extended Grateful Dead family has adopted her, thanks to her work with Steve Kimock and **Bob Weir** (who returns the favor in this set). With *Love & Murder*, she continues to move away from the pop singer-songwriter path that many thought she would pursue, and presents herself as a solitary vocalist and folk minstrel. As the title implies, these songs deal with conflicting emotions and sentiments that are often at odds. That dichotomy is showcased not only on the original numbers composed by Mendelson and longtime co-writer **Steve McEwan** (the lovely "Jericho," "Love You Tonight" and "Coney Island"), but also on covers of Bob Dylan (a plucky ukulele take on "Just Like a Woman") and Roy Orbison (a languid duet on "Blue Bayou" featuring Weir). In some regards, that understated sound makes for a tentative return, but the feelings and conviction suggest otherwise. Hopefully, it won't take Mendelson another eight years to express any deepening desire. *Lee Zimmerman*

Béla Fleck

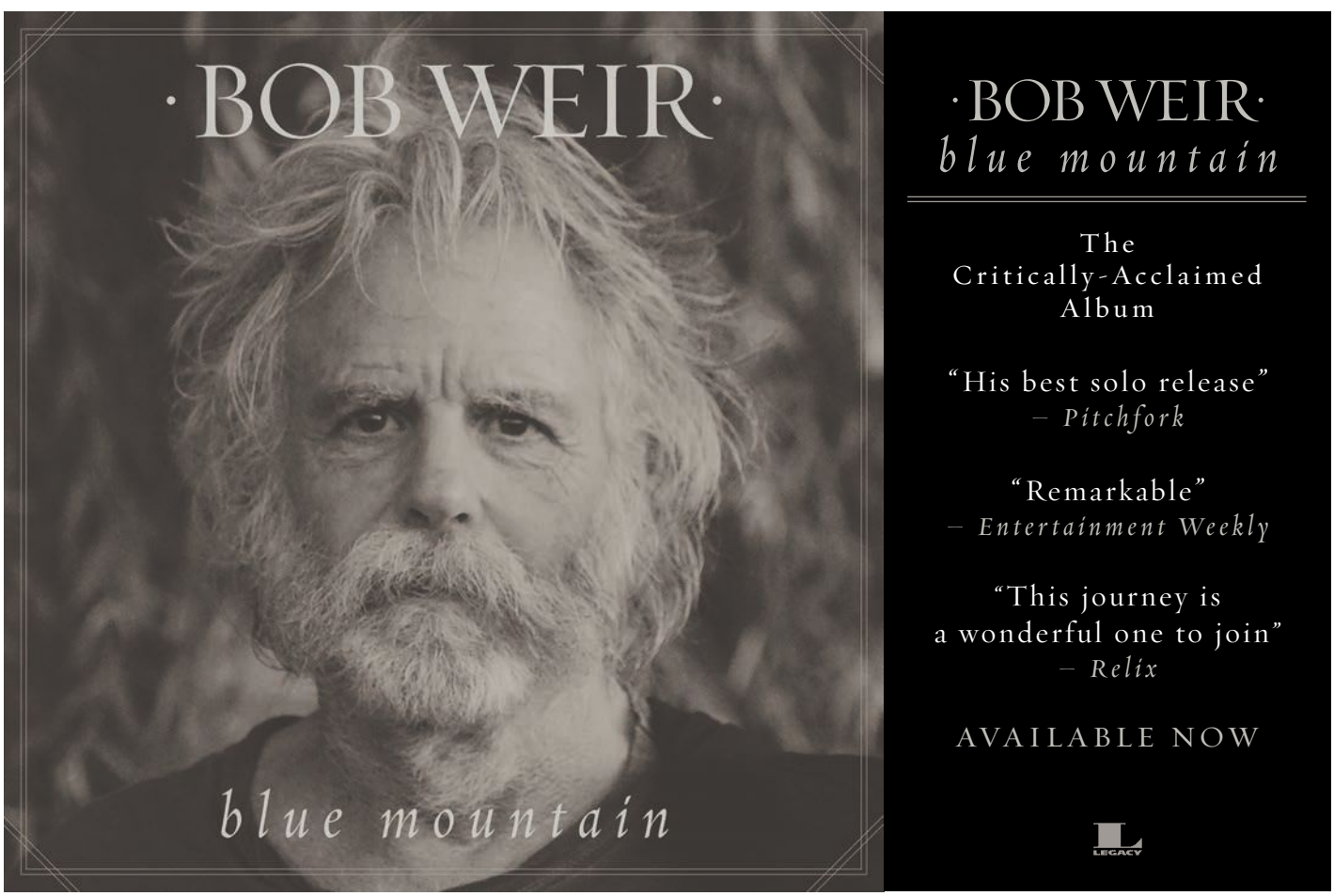
Juno Concerto ROUNDER

It seems someone forgot to tell **Béla Fleck** that there are certain things a banjo just can't do–like play with symphony orchestras. Thank you to those people who neglected to inform him because, like so much of Fleck's work, *Juno Concerto* is boundary-busting, breathtaking stuff. Fleck has said that he wrote the work–the album consists of the three-movement title piece performed with the **Colorado Symphony**, conducted by **Jose Luis Gomez**, and two additional tracks that pair Fleck with the **Brooklyn Rider** string quartet–for his young son, and, indeed, the primary composition oozes the newness and pure sense of wonder that accompanies parenthood. The "Juno Concerto," as Fleck points out at the onset of his liner notes, is his second banjo concerto, and he's allied with other classical musicians for other projects, but this one is the most ambitious and complex of the lot. The grandiosity of it really doesn't manifest fully until midway into "Movement I," as the interplay between banjo and orchestra–alternating at times, converging at others–falls into a groove that makes this unusual alignment feel perfectly natural. From there on out, you'll find yourself wondering why banjos and orchestras aren't sharing stages all the time. While the vibe on the two tracks with banjo and quartet is necessarily leaner–though it's no less potent–on both "Griff" and "Quintet for Banjo and Strings: Movement II" Fleck finds a comfy place among the violins, viola and cello, and creates with them a new entity that obliterates genre and the roles of the instruments involved. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Animal Collective

The Painters DOMINO

Hey, hey, they're the AnCos, and they're still doing that funny, staggered vocal arrangement routine that made them sound so far-out in the go-go days of the first Obama administration. In a less light-filled age, the impact of **Animal Collective**'s **Avey Tare** and **Panda Bear** singing in cascades of nonsense is both comforting and a little dislocating, as the four songs of Animal Collective's new *The Painters* EP bounce around sonic space with a sense of play that remains provocative and inscrutable. A companion to last year's *Painting With* full-length, the 14 minutes of music hit plenty of the Animal Collective sweet spots, from the perpetual tumble and stereo-panned call-and-response of "Goalkeeper" to the roll-slowed weirdness of "Peacemaker." With the sometimes-trio/sometimes-quartet well into the middle period of their now decade-and-a-half career–walking the art-pop line between ossified stylization and experimentation–*The Painters* doesn't offer many new coordinates, give or take the vaguely Paul Simon-like confessional turns of "Kinda Bonkers" and the EP-closing cover of Martha & The Vandellas' 1967 hit "Jimmy Mack," which points someplace they haven't quite been before. Like so much of the band's most compelling work, "Jimmy Mack" seems equally a breath away from accessibility and a complete technicolor flip-out–saucer-eyed soul at the edge of the legitimately mainstream psychedelic dance-pop that Animal Collective seem destined to make. *Jesse Jarnow*



1 Fleet Foxes

"Third of May/Ōdaigahara"
From the album *Crack-Up*
Nonesuch

Crack-Up is Fleet Foxes' highly anticipated third album, coming six years after the acclaimed, Grammy-nominated Helplessness Blues (2011), and nearly a decade since the band's 2008 self-titled debut, which established their profound impact on the global musical landscape. Crack-Up's 11 songs were written by Robin Pecknold and co-produced by Pecknold and longtime bandmate Skyler Skjelset.

www.nonesuch.com/albums/crack-up

2 Formula 5

"Sad Bed"
From the album *All Points North*
Self-released

Formula 5 is a four-piece improvisational rock band out of Albany, N.Y. With a diverse catalog of distinctive originals and familiar covers, Formula 5 will keep your feet moving and your mind engaged. Blending high-energy rock 'n' roll with tasteful grooves, there is an emphasis on collective, goal-driven improvisation.

www.f5jams.com

3 Yonder Mountain String Band

"Take a Chance on Me"
From the album *Love. Ain't Love*
Frog Pad

For nearly 19 years, Yonder Mountain String Band has redefined bluegrass music. Love. Ain't Love is Yonder's most surprising, creative and energetic studio excursion to date. Melding sophisticated songcraft with irrepressible spirit, Love. Ain't Love is a testament to their organic, dynamic and intensely personal brand of contemporary bluegrass-fueled Americana.

www.yondermountain.com

4 Backup Planet

"Little Mingo"
From the album *Reactions*
Self-released

Backup Planet are making a big name for themselves, thanks to stand-out musicianship and their notorious live shows that weave improvisation with arena-size anthems, echoing with progressive intricacy, funk swagger and even a metallic edge. Their truly unique sound emanates from a place that seems familiar, yet uncharted.

www.backupplanetmusic.com

5 Cabinet

"Bottom of the Sea"
From the album *Cool River*
Cabinet Wax

Cabinet is a band with roots firmly planted in the Appalachian tradition. They wear their influences like badges, honoring the canon of roots, bluegrass, country and folk, and weaving these sounds into a patchwork, Americana quilt. With this latest track, "Bottom of the Sea," the band steps out into the rock and roll world... just a little bit.

www.cabinetmusic.com

6 The Muggs

"Lightning Cries"
From the album *Straight Up Boogaloo*
Muggs Music

Detroit's best blues-rock power trio, The Muggs' five full-length albums of electrified guitar riffage, a voice like Bon Scott and John Lennon, bombastic Fender Rhodes bass and thunderous drums make this Detroit three-piece one of the best kept secrets in the world.

www.themuggs.com

7 Soule Monde

"Rocket"
From the album *Must Be Nice*
Ropeadope

Soule Monde is avant funk erupting from the syncopated minds of power drummer Russ Lawton and B3 wizard Ray Paczkowski. An ideal union of swagger and raw talent, the duo is fervently cemented into an indestructible pocket, where bold improvisational leaps by either player are met by a near-telepathic response from the other.

www.soulemonde.com

8 The Big Wu

"Minnesota Moon"
From the album *25 Year Retrospective Album*
Self-released

Still rocking their powerful, moving and energizing original music for the fans is a jamband with a unique style and presence. The Big Wu combine strong, free-flowing improv and vocal harmonies with finely crafted songs for all tastes. Oh, and their fans are famously friendly.

www.thebigwu.com

9 Voodoo Visionary

"I've Got a Feeling"
From the album *Off the Ground*
The Playroom Records

Voodoo Visionary, hailing from the Southern musical mecca of Atlanta, plays a style of music they call psycho funk; a mix of psychedelic Southern funk, Michigan soul and Gulf Coast flavor. Voodoo Visionary released their sophomore album, Off the Ground, in February 2017 and is actively touring throughout the country.

www.voodoovisionary.com

10 Subterranean

"Signals Fade"
From the album *Loom*
Self-released

Subterranean is a fearless rock quartet forged from the gritty streets of Dayton, Ohio. Their sound is deeply rooted with infectious grooves and is elevated by soaring guitar and soulfully seasoned saxophone. Their organic and explorative songwriting style gives them an eclectic and accessible sound that is represented on their debut album Loom.

www.subtmusic.com

11 Uncle Stump

"Fence"
From the album *Live at PonderRosa Studios 1-14-17*
Self-released

From New Jersey's backwoods, Uncle Stump plays what fans have deemed mud funk. Their unique take on funk, with a twist of bluegrass (among other things), consistently breeds unique and unforgettable live shows. 100 percent of the proceeds from their debut album Family Tree will be donated directly to the ALS Association.

www.unclestump.com

12 Dr. Slothclaw

"Half Pint"
From the album *Deep Space Boogie*
Self-released

If P-Funk and Zappa had a lovechild, it would be Dr. Slothclaw. The PA-based freak-funk phenom has been blowing up the live-music scene with their funky mix of blues, psychedelic and jam since 2006. Their highly original sound will blow you away and shake your booty.

www.drslothclaw.com

13 EDITOR'S PICK: Dispatch

"Painted Yellow Lines"
From the album *America, Location 12*
Bomber Records

"Painted Yellow Lines" is a song from Dispatch's new album America, Location 12. America, Location 12 is the first new Dispatch album in five years and is out now via the band's own Bomber Records label.

www.dispatchmusic.com

14 JamOFF! Winner: Bad Faces

"The Old Boys"
From the album *Broken Window Dressing*
Self-released

Somewhere at the crossroads of traditional roots and modern psychedelic music lies Brooklyn, N.Y.'s Bad Faces; wry and plaintive, weathered but fresh, and all-American.

www.badfacesmusic.com

Nicholas Payton

Afro-Caribbean Mixtape

PAYTONE/ROPEADOPE

Nicholas Payton has never been one to aim low. The multi-instrumentalist and composer decries the word jazz, preferring to call what he creates "postmodern New Orleans music"–he's got a tune on this release called "Jazz Is a Four-Letter Word"–but he has nonetheless been labeled a jazz musician since his emergence, even as he continues to attempt to shed the term. Perhaps it's best to give him the benefit of the doubt and approach this double-CD without any preconceptions at all. Payton and his collaborators–keyboardist **Kevin Hays**, bassist **Vicente Archer**, drummer **Joe Dyson**, percussionist **Daniel Sadownick** and turntablist **DJ Lady Fingaz**–both transcend and eviscerate genres in their quest to capture, as Payton has described it, "the resilience of black people and African culture." *Afro-Caribbean Mixtape* deftly skirts the contemporary and the ancient here, slipping seamlessly between rhythms and sounds that suggest far-flung origins and eras. Quite often, as on "#BAMboula," a 14-minute, easy-paced groove built atop Payton's trumpet and a Fender Rhodes–both he and Hays are credited with playing the electric keyboard–the vibe is reminiscent of Miles Davis' Afro-centric early-'70s experiments, while "Junie's Boogie," with its throwback synth riffs, fatback rhythm and layered backing vocals, has more in common with classic Stevie Wonder or Earth, Wind & Fire. Not surprisingly, given the title, there is also a Latin element sewn in–the back-to-back "La Guajira" and "El Guajiro" mine that vein–and several tracks connect directly to pan-African rhythmic concepts. It's nothing if not ambitious and, call it what you like–for this listener, jazz still suffices just fine–it's an absorbing, finely crafted listen throughout. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Ear Crystals BY RICHARD GEHR

The search for other-world audio gems

Underground expressionism. Bassist **Melvin Gibbs**, drummer **J.T. Lewis** and guitarist **Brandon Ross** have been detonating power-trio parameters together as **Harriet Tubman** since 1998. They're steeped in the DNA of Ornette, Hendrix, P-Funk and electric Miles, and on *Araminta* (Sunnyside), they push things over the edge with the addition of **Wadada Leo Smith**, an outstanding trumpeter who brings brawny gusto. Their screaming new jam session of an album roils, skronks, bites and wails with irrepressible sonic napalm. As independent as their abolitionist namesake, Harriet Tubman is an irresistible force of truth, beauty and bone-rattling improvisation on tracks like the elegantly raw Smith composition "President Obama's Speech at the Selma Bridge."

Reading between the lions. Bassist **Moppa Elliott**'s septet, **Mostly Other People Do the Killing**, is a group of jazz conceptualists (a previous project recreated Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue*, note-for-note), knowing historians and virtuoso wackadoodles for whom humor definitely belongs in music. The centerpiece of *Loafer's Hollow* (Hot Cup) is a suite of five pieces inspired by specific passages in some of Elliott's favorite novels. "Bloomsburg (For James Joyce)" mirrors *Ulysses*' orgasmic conclusion and "Mason & Dixon (For Thomas Pynchon)" quotes Cannonball Adderley, among other citations. It's great, goofy fun–witty, sophisticated and virtuosic at once, with a swing-era imperative to entertain.

Overseizures. MOPDTK guitarist **Brandon Seabrook** also brings a feral spirit to **Eivind Opsvik**'s *Overseas V* (Loyal Label), which, likewise, distills wit and smarts into short, powerful tunes. The latest in the Norwegian bassist/composer's ongoing "Overseas" series–with a group filled out by **Tony Malaby** (sax), **Kenny Wollesen** (drums) and **Jacob Sacks** (piano)–is inspired by late-'70s post-punk swagger. From the Beefheart stagger of "I'm Up This Step" to the disco whomp of "Brraps!" and the long motorik coda of "First Challenge on the Road," Opsvik's outfit sounds like it's set its teeth into fresh meat and ain't letting go.

Splash from the ashram. *World Spirituality Classics, Volume 1: The Ecstatic Music of Alice Coltrane Turiyasangitananda* (Luaka Bop) cherry-picks four albums that John Coltrane's widow, a great jazz improviser in her own right, recorded between 1982 and '95 while leading the mostly African-American Sai Anantam Ashram in Southern California. **Alice Coltrane Turiyasangitananda**'s music draws from Vedic devotional chants, solo bhajans and participatory Kirtans that she often accompanies on an Oberheim OB-8 analog synthesizer that produces swooning string arrangements as well as swooping science-fiction effects. In short, Alice's music sounds like nothing else you've heard, or maybe a gospel-choir field trip to Nepal.

Ocean promises. Drummer **Alex Cline** and his **Flower Garland Orchestra**'s exquisite *Ocean of Vows* (Cryptogramophone) is another world spirituality classic. Cline is a Zen Buddhist and his 10-piece, two-hour work is based on excerpts from the Avatamsaka Sutra. The 14-piece orchestra features his sister-in-law **Yuka C. Honda** (samples), **Jeff Gauthier** (violin) and Alex's twin brother, **Nels Cline**, on guitar. Cline's oceanic work contains extensive sung passages that merge into slow-motion nebular events, with some exceptional soloing along the way. "This is because that is/ That is because this is," chants the entire ensemble during the especially cosmic "A Flash of Lightning." And it is indeed.

Noam Pikelny

Universal Favorite ROUNDER

With prog-grass supergroup Punch Brothers, banjo master **Noam Pikelny** is the textbook definition of a "sideman." In concert, and often in the stereo plane of their records, he's typically positioned stage left, peppering their virtuoso workouts with eyebrow-raising surges of five-string color. He's an integral cog in that well-oiled machine, yet it's tough to picture him as a true frontman. Pikelny's recorded three albums under his own name, but those were ensemble efforts–*Universal Favorite* is a literal solo album, recorded with zero outside accompaniment and bare-bones production. One half presents the banjoist as a pseudo folk artist, crooning traditional bluegrass and country cover tunes in his plainspoken bass/baritone. The other, infinitely more intriguing half carries on in the vein of his main band, weaving elements of modern classical and bluegrass into cascading arpeggios ("Waveland") and complex harmonic clusters ("Sugar Maple," co-written by Punch Brother **Gabe Witcher**, the album's producer and co-mixer). These instrumental tracks are the obvious draw for hardcore Punch fans, who probably care less about Pikelny's singing voice than the gear breakdown in the liner notes. (Preview: On seven of these 12 tracks, he brandished a 1941 Gibson Style 7 banjo with a Robin Smith 5-string neck.) In a testament to his compositional abilities, the album only drags on the cover tunes, like a rote version of Josh Ritter and John Hurt's "Folk Bloodbath." *Universal Favorite* proves that Pikelny boasts enough charm and skill for the solo spotlight–he just needs more confidence. *Ryan Reed*

Pond

The Weather MARATHON ARTISTS

Perth, Australia's psychedelic music scene has risen to prominence alongside Tame Impala, the best-known group to emerge from the city. But **Pond**, longtime associates of Tame Impala frontman **Kevin Parker**, may be an even better example of the static-laced psych-rock created in the Australian locale. On their new album, *The Weather*, which Parker produced, the four-piece group brings a sense of abstraction to its songs, veering from strange, euphoric melodies to grungy pop moments. A loose concept album somewhat about Pond's hometown, it's a compelling effort. Cuts like "Paint Me Silver" and the title track reveal the band's stylistic range, each bringing in elements of psychedelia, grunge, punk and indie rock to create vast, strange landscapes of sound. Other tunes are more abrasive, like "Zen Automation," which is cacophonous and unsettling. It feels like a song that's not really a song, although the band makes a strong case for the idea that there isn't a specific structure or elements that music should contain. "A/B" has a similar offsetting tone; the initial sounds never quite come into harmony with one another. It's almost unpleasant on an album, but it would likely be more interesting live–here, it's exhausting to get through the aggressive first two minutes of the track before it quiets down and glides into a hushed instrumental melody. The band (and Parker) seem to be pointedly saying that music can be whatever it wants to be. Or maybe they just made the album that emerged without assuming it needed to make a statement. Either way, *The Weather* leaves an impact–one that isn't always nice to listen to but is always interesting. *Emily Zemler*

Marco Benevento

Woodstock Sessions

WOODSTOCK SESSIONS/ROYAL POTATO FAMILY

Marco Benevento's newest release, which also marks his first live album with his 10-year-old trio setup, takes much of the ethos of last year's vocal-heavy sunshine-daydream *The Story of Fred Short* and expands it in the live setting, which Benevento clearly relishes. The main meat of the album, recorded and part of Applehead Recording's ongoing live-in-studio "Woodstock Sessions," is "The Story of Fred Short" suite. Benevento says it originally came about as part of a long solo improv writing session in his home studio, which just happens to also be in Woodstock. Basically a record of him playing in his backyard for his neighbors, Benevento's *Woodstock Sessions* is a pure slice of fun. The chronically jovial keyboardist is in fine form, urging the audience to dance and sing along while also calling on his bandmates–new bassist **Karina Rykman** and drummer **Andy Borger**–when he wants to give the spotlight over to them. (He even namechecks his daughter Ruby at the beginning of "Dropkick.") While the first half of the album focuses on "Fred Short," the latter half delves back into Benevento's more instrumental catalog, allowing him to show his range and influences, from jazz to indie, all with his characteristic penchant for a catchy

melody. Benevento clearly enjoys what he does for a living and, with this live album, his smile is almost visible through the music. *Matt Inman*

Chaz Bundick Meets the Mattson 2

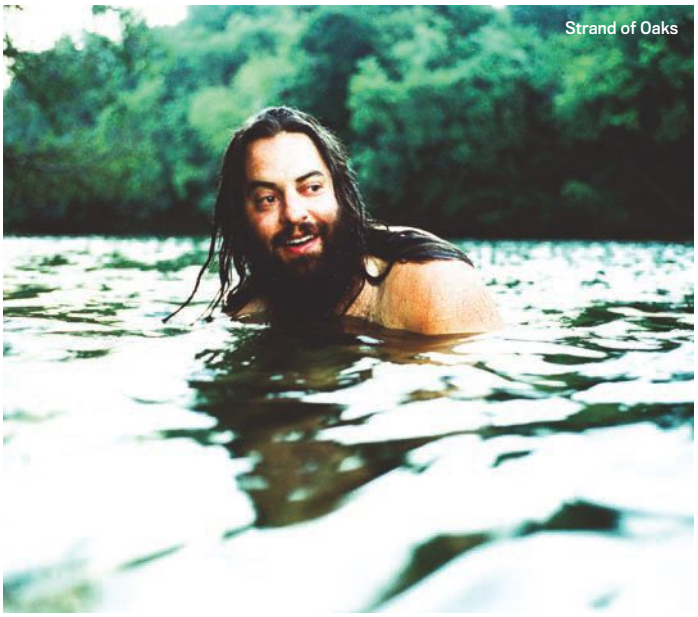
Star Stuff COMPANY

With each album, **Chaz Bundick** expands his stylistic repertoire–from icy chillwave to lo-fi funk to vintage psych-pop. But the stunning part is his seamless execution: Some genre-hoppers, like Beck, approach each new musical role like a method actor, but the Toro y Moi mastermind never strains for sonic shifts. And on this collaborative LP with jazz duo **The Mattson 2**, Budnick carves out a thrilling new path: prog. The project began innocently enough, as the musicians bonded over a borrowed drum throne and launched into some heady jam sessions. That freewheeling vibe carries over to the fittingly titled *Star Stuff*, an album of cosmic instrumental grooves and textures. Most Toro y Moi albums are true Bundick solo affairs, but *Star Stuff* harnesses the energy and muscle of a true live band–while alluding to several famous ones. "Sonmoi" is a boiling indie-rock *Bitches Brew*, a psychedelic barrage of stereo-panned guitar, throbbing fuzz-bass, clattering congas and Krautrock drone–quilted into a fluid instrumental journey via Teo Macero-styled editing. With its jazzy guitar figures and wordless crooning, "Don't Blame Yourself" lands somewhere between Steely Dan and prog-rock giants Camel, while the Latin percussion of "Cascade" teases a legit Santana direction. These reference points may be obvious, but they're so varied–and nailed with such colorful conviction–that they never feel stale. It's never been Bundick's style to stay in one place, but he and The Mattson 2 spark too much chemistry here to keep this as a one-off lark. *Ryan Reed*

Jessi Colter

The Psalms LEGACY

The Psalms is a textbook case of how to mold the rawest materials into a thing of beauty and grace. The backstory goes like this: While producer **Lenny Kaye** (Patti Smith's longtime guitarist and producer of Suzanne Vega and many more) was working with the late country legend Waylon Jennings on his memoir, he overheard Jennings' wife, country singer **Jessi Colter** (best known for her 1975 hit "I'm Not Lisa"), creating impromptu songs on the piano from Old Testament Psalms. In 2007, after Jennings' passing, Kaye recorded Colter, again spontaneously putting the Psalms to music. In the years since, Kaye tinkered with the recordings only minimally, and this is the result.



The Psalms is gospel music in its purest state. The text isn't reworked–these are the Psalms as Colter saw them on the page–or an attempt to embellish beyond what Kaye and Colter felt might put the words and piano into a deeper context. On several tracks, Kaye layers in his own guitar, bass or pedal steel. Keyboard legend **Al Kooper** gives a handful of tunes additional soul via his Hammond organ (and, on one Psalm, 45, "synthesizer, French horn, electric piano, lead guitar, locusts"), **Bobby Previte** touches up some tracks with drums and percussion, and **Jenni Muldaur** is among the background vocalists.

The arrangements range from the droning opener, "Psalm 150 Praise Ye the Lord," brought to a crescendo by Previte's cymbals and timpani, to the soulful reading Colter gives "Psalm 23." The performances are subtle and never raucous, but they teem with life and, of course, the true faith that Colter brings to each heartfelt rendition. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Robyn Hitchcock

Robyn Hitchcock YEP ROC

A profoundly gifted and insatiably witty songwriter, **Robyn Hitchcock** has made a career out of merging musical styles, with an eccentric streak that still harks back to the surrealist psych-rock scene of his native London. (Pink Floyd's tragic genius Syd Barrett is a personal hero.) In America, he's more of an artist's artist–popular with like-minded musicians and a fiercely devoted fanbase that might count Elvis Costello and XTC among their faves, but just missing his shot at mass appeal with gems like 1988's *Globe of Frogs* (with his longtime backing band The Egyptians) and the Jonathan Demme-directed documentary *Storefront Hitchcock*, released in 1998. Even so, Hitchcock's latest studio album, his 21st, might be his most American yet, and not just because it was recorded in Nashville, where he now lives, with a stellar group of local session aces behind him (including **Grant Lee Phillips** and **Gillian Welch** on backing vocals). "Virginia Woolf" and "Time Coast" retain a lysergic, Lennon-like sheen, and yet these songs also bristle with an alt-country twang that takes over fully on the outlaw hoedown "I Pray When I'm Drunk" and the oddly titled "1970 in Aspic," which could easily have been a live staple for Gram Parsons in his prime. And therein lies the hook: Whether he's live in the studio or live onstage, as two recent sold-out dates in New York City with Yo La Tengo beside him made crystal clear, Hitchcock might be a stalwart Brit rocker at heart, but he's ready and willing to be ours whenever we want him. And we should too. *Bill Murphy*

Simon Kirke

All Because of You BMG/THE END

While **Simon Kirke** proved his worthiness as a member of Ringo Starr's All Starr Band and with an occasional album–specifically, a pair of otherwise obscure outings in 2005 and 2011–it's his tenures with Free and Band Company that will most likely ensure his legacy. That said, *All Because of You* is a surprisingly impressive effort, one bound up with lovestruck sentiments and expressions of an idyllic and enthusiastic nature. While the title track appears to affirm equal rights for those of alternative sexual persuasions ("I want to be free to do one thing, and that is left to be free to love who I choose"), in truth, his musings are mostly directed toward the one woman who's the object of his affection. In fact, aside from some wistful reflections about wanting to own a place by the shore ("Warm Gulf Water"), all the songs revolve around romance. Naturally, none of this brings any echoes of his old groups, although a worthy remake of one former chestnut, "Feel Like Making Love," succeeds by emphasizing the softer strains of Bad Co.'s original. Likewise, Kirke's penchant for rock of an easy listening variety serves the set well. *Lee Zimmerman*

Strand of Oaks

Hard Love DEAD OCEANS

If you embrace the idea of rock as a cathartic, healing ritual or something pretty close to religion or magic, then you will enjoy the new **Strand of Oaks**, which hints at the epic rock-preacher work of Nick Cave, Bruce Springsteen, Paul Westerberg, Patti Smith, Joe Strummer and even The Cult. The layers of nostalgia are thick and the sonic allusions are many, but it never seems overly focused on recreating anything. The album is more about processing the feeling of being lost in the past, of losing the past–the way music and memory lift you up but also pull you back and sometimes hold you down with their weight. Strand of Oaks is **Timothy Showalter**, and he sings with a pleasing bit of husk and depth to his voice, like he's been up all night doing it and has just had a breakthrough. The songs generally move with a saturated cloud of heavy distortion that's kept low enough in the mix to make a haze without obscuring everything else. Fans of The Hold Steady and The War on Drugs should be able to sink into this record without much trouble. Those in search of a little '90s radio-rock nostalgia might find themselves thinking of the Goo Goo Dolls or the Gin Blossoms, more in the texture of the recording, the contours of a melody or the timbre of Showalter's voice. "Make it good, make it real, make it true," he sings on "Salt Brothers," an anthemic, slow-burning song with a moving chorus–"When you come down, I'll come up"–and a biting sustain to the electric guitars that approaches a howl. *John Adamian*

Ruthie Foster

Joy Comes Back BLUE CORN

Now here's a song you never expect to hear on a blues album: "War Pigs," the Black Sabbath classic. It's six tunes in on three-time Grammy nominee **Ruthie Foster**'s latest, and damn if it doesn't kick some ass. Foster has never been one to shy away from trying something different, and it doesn't take more than a few seconds

of pounding drums, nasty harmonica, floor-shaking bass and Foster's own slip-sliding Dobro before you know she's serious here. Her voice comes next, smooth but tough, at times bordering on lethal—you do not want to get in this woman's way. But then she flips the dial a complete 180 on this album, whose title references the reality of Foster's recent life, a time when not everything has been going her way. The title track draws on another sensibility, the gospel music that—as is true for so many blues artists—Foster absorbed in her youth. It's uplifting but never saccharine, hopeful but forthright, and it's got **Derek Trucks** providing the slide, about which nothing more needs to be said. Other material here comes from a diverse list of songwriters, ranging from Chris Stapleton to Mississippi John Hurt, and the team of Stevie Wonder and Ivy Jo Hunter, whose "Loving You Is Sweeter Than Ever" was a big hit for the Four Tops in 1966. Foster effortlessly summons the soul that the Motowners built into it and brings her best game. She really knows no other way. *Jeff Tamarkin*

BNQT

Volume 1 DUALTONE

There's enough talent behind **BNQT** to headline an entire festival. The supergroup (or, as they've called themselves, the "Poor Man's Traveling Wilburys") includes vocalists **Ben Bridwell** (Band of Horses), **Alex Kapranos** (Franz Ferdinand), **Fran Healy** (Travis), **Jason Lytle** (Grandaddy) and **Eric Pulido** (Midlake). The band is rounded out by three additional Midlake members. Pulido's reference to that legendary '80s group may seem jokingly convenient, but there's something to it—BNQT's debut, *Volume 1*, gels like an excellent classic-rock mixtape, wherein each frontman gets his moment to shine and show off a unique style. And with this many ace songwriters, the album lacks any real duds. As a whole, *Volume 1* is unified in its almost effortlessly swirling arrangements, juggling between lofty strings and twinkling keyboards, loose and lively guitars, splashy percussion and, unsurprisingly, endlessly catchy firepower with each chorus. Bridwell's "Unlikely Force" pairs a wafting melody with warm, playful horns and cascading guitars. With Band of Horses, the tune would've been a moodier affair; with BNQT, it's refreshingly bright. Kapranos' "Hey Banana" recasts his post-punk vocals in an early '60s psych-rock cloak, with jangly guitars and a far-off, whispered bridge: "I love you, banana." BNQT keep things fairly restrained throughout; only Pulido's album opener, "Restart," really rocks, with its buzzing Thin Lizzy riff and stadium-rock drumbeat. As collaborations go, this isn't a reinvention, but it is certainly a great refresh. "What were we thinking when we started? I think we could all use a restart, but what does that mean?" he sings. He's answered his own question. *Justin Jacobs*

The Gift

Altar LA FOLIE

The Gift may be Portugal's most famous indie-rock band. They've taken home the MTV Europe award for Best Portuguese Act and have two gold records in their homeland. They've played all over Europe and the United States in the last 20 years, but *Altar* is their first album to be widely distributed internationally. The record was produced by **Brian Eno** and mixed by **Flood** (Depeche Mode, U2, The Killers). **Nuno Gonçalves** and **Sónia Tavares**, the band's vocalists/songwriters, collaborated with Eno on arranging and writing the album's songs, a process that took two years in three recording studios to complete. The result balances the New-Wave sounds of the '80s with the melancholy terrain of classical Portuguese pop. Gonçalves and Tavares sing sassy harmonies on "Big Fish," a funky, percussion-drenched, New York City dance track. "Love Without Violins" is a cynical take on romance with a laid-back, Depeche-Mode-like pulse, while the bright celebration of the joys of infatuation on "Clinic Hope" is driven by layers of bubbly synthesizers. The last four tracks—most notably "You Will Be Queen," a song with a despondent vocal by Gonçalves that glorifies a lost romance, and "What If...," a ballad that details the pleasures of submerging yourself in hopeful daydreams—are drenched in saudade, a Portuguese emotion that expresses a state that's sad but not defeated, an awareness of the sorrow that can hide within the happiest moments. That feeling adds a subtle touch of soul to every track on *Altar*. *J. Poet*

Eric Slick

Palisades EGGHUNT

Philadelphia's junkyard rock band Dr. Dog are fronted by not one, but two strongly stylized singers. So to hear the band's drummer stepping out from behind his kit to create as sublime a record as *Palisades* is frankly like discovering a secret weapon. Though **Eric Slick** also co-leads the band Lithuania, *Palisades* puts his talent on full display. The eight-song collection was culled during a period in 2014 when, according to Slick, he was wading deeply into meditation, dream therapy and mysticism. It shows. These songs float along like a slow river raft, occasionally bursting into colorful fits of guitar, sputtering percussion and keyboards.

Palisades only truly rocks at its very beginning: opener "You Became the Light" is a driving, psychedelic romp written about Slick's first foray into meditation. The album then, notably, loosens its grip. The bright, instructive "You Are Not Your Mind" rides a popping drumbeat, unfolding like a flower into a playful chorus that takes a page from The Flaming Lips. Just add confetti cannons. On "Evergreen," Slick plays the mad conductor, bringing an almost Kinks-ian orchestration to the sleepy song.

Palisades was recorded in the Anacortes, Wash. studio of Mt. Eerie's Phil Elverum in 2014. Slick sat on the recordings for a few years before finishing them up in 2016. He took his time with *Palisades*, never rushing to completion. That level of comfort and ease shows up all over the record. *Palisades* is a daydream of a listen: warm, pleasant and lovely. *Justin Jacobs*

Aimee Mann

Mental Illness SUPEREGO

Relationships are hard. In fact, in this topsy-turvy world, just keeping yourself together day-to-day is no picnic. The long-running critical brief on **Aimee Mann** is that she's so obsessed with clawing her way toward the elusive essence of the human condition that her music will always reflect the ultimate sadness and futility of that quest. Of course, what's nearly always forgotten is that you need a well-rounded sense of humor—the wryest of the wry, let's say—to write a heartrending song like "Save Me" and still keep your sanity. The ironically named *Mental Illness* is Mann's first album since 2012's brightly lit *Charmer*, and though the presence of a string quartet ought to be signal enough that the music here is starker, darker and almost defiantly acoustic (with the ever-tasteful **Jonathan Coulton** fingerpicking throughout), the mood somehow remains upbeat. As rubbed-raw and morose as "You Never Loved Me" and "Lies of Summer" might sound at first, Mann's joyful lilt in singing them is palpable—even infectious. "Patient Zero" is the arguable centerpiece. Co-written with Coulton, and featuring **Ted Leo** on backing vocals with the full rhythm section (**Jamie Edwards** on piano, **Paul Bryan** on bass, **Jay Bellerose** on drums), this is Aimee Mann at her absolute best: melodically flawless, subdued yet sultry, wistful yet worldly and making it all seem easy. *Bill Murphy*

Jazz Is Phsh

He Never Spoke a Word

SELF-RELEASED

Perhaps there are times when you feel like mellowing out but don't want to sacrifice Phish's songwriting prowess. **Jazz Is Phsh**'s debut album, *He Never Spoke a Word*, does just that, putting Phish originals into, well, jazzy moods. Formed in 2015 by brothers **Adam** and **Matthew Chase** and taking inspiration from the Jazz Is Dead group, the band features an all-star lineup of musicians with jam-scene roots, including **Carl Gerhard** (Giant Country Horns), **Michael Ray** (Cosmic Country Horns), pianist **Holly Bowling** and Dave Matthews Band saxophonist **Jeff Coffin**. The album was mixed by **Bryce Goggin**, who sat at the helm for Phish's *Farmhouse* and *Round Room*. So there is no shortage of talent on board, some with direct connections to Phish themselves. Does it work? Of the many genres of music that Phish is adept at, jazz is certainly one of them, and you can hear it immediately in Jazz Is Phsh's re-creations of "Cars Trucks Buses," "Magilla" and "Lawn Boy"—faithful interpretations that mimic the originals, except with more horns.

He Never Spoke a Word gets more interesting when the ensemble transforms tunes from the more rock-rooted corners of Phish's catalog into true jazz-funk numbers. "46 Days" and "Ghost" sound almost like new compositions, while the weird, esoteric timings of "Foam" and "Weigh" have fun, bouncy feels that aren't necessarily present in the Phish versions. And that's what *He Never Spoke a Word* boils down to. There's a feeling of familiarity running throughout, but the decision to go for deep cuts makes this debut a slightly weird little slice of Phish worth checking out at least once. *Mike Ayers*

Mount Eerie

A Crow Looked at Me

P.W. ELVERUM & SUN

This is a record about death, about the death of the singer's wife—about the blow to their young family. It's heartbreaking and devastating. This is a kind of emotional purging, a bleak ritual magic, an expression of grief and love echoed out into the world. Singer **Phil Elverum**, who formerly released music under the name The Microphones, somehow manages to get through these recordings, made mainly with his wife's instruments, without curling up in the fetal position. He pushes past the bleak sadness by probing the simple inadequacy of song, art, creativity and even reason when it comes to dealing with death. Fans of Codeine will find something potent in the slow, affectless way that Elverum radiates a deep and haunting emptiness. These are stark songs played on guitar, bass and piano, with minimal ornamentation. Elverum's vocalizing is as much like a poetry reading as it is like singing. He doesn't push too hard as he sketches out songs like "Emptiness Pt. 2," about "a dream of

self-negation" set in the expanses of nature. The lack of any edification or lesson or comfort from death is the root note of many of these songs. The slow eradication of a specific memory of a deceased loved one turns into another slow-blooming emptiness. Conceptually, this album is as heavy and dark as the blackest metal, only it's so quiet as to almost be silent. *John Adamian*

Kelley Ryan

Telescope MANATEE

On her third album, **Kelley Ryan** finds herself in fine company. **Marshall Crenshaw** and **Kimm Rogers** served as writing partners, while **Don Dixon** and **Marti Jones** settled into the studio for backup support. Even so, Ryan maintains a decidedly low-key setting, never allowing her guests to overwhelm her fragile melodies and unassuming singing style. Credit Jones with adding subtle backing harmonies that fail to usurp Ryan's role at center stage, and Dixon for providing string arrangements that don't distract from the overall ambience. That's fortunate, given that the songs maintain a dim haze, with "Save Me," "Flake White Heart," "Pulling for Romeo" and "The Broken News" managing a shimmering effect throughout. There's no denying that it's a lovely set of songs, even if Ryan's resonance is somewhat reserved. Indeed, it's only when there's a counterpoint to the melody (in the rare case of "Secret Life") or an effective attempt to emulate a catchy chorus (as found in "Real Gone Girl") that there's any proviso for a ready refrain. As a result, *Telescope* requires the listener to zoom in for full effect, especially when it comes to picking up on the niceties and nuances. At that point, its seductive charms take flight as the music flows effortlessly from track to track. Not surprisingly, Ryan finds common ground with Carole King, Carly Simon, Melissa Manchester and other easy listening icons, but she still manages to make a warm impression all on her own. *Lee Zimmerman*

Reverend Peyton's Big Damn Band

Front Porch Sessions FAMILY OWNED RECORDS/THIRTY TIGERS

This blues/rock combo only has three members—percussionist and vocalist **Max Senteney**, washboard player and vocalist **Breezy Peyton**, and the **Reverend Peyton** himself on guitar and vocals—but they produce a massive sound. The music here is stripped down to its essence, with most tracks centering on the Reverend's bristling guitar work and larger-than-life vocals. The bright fingerpicking on "One More Thing" contrasts nicely with a list of the everyday disasters that threaten a hardworking family. Peyton sings it with a winning

El Michels Affair

combination of anger and ironic humor. He also wails out the cryptic message of "What You Did to the Boy Ain't Right," punctuating his angry howl with stinging slide-guitar asides, and adds a ragtime lilt to his playing on "When You Lose Your Money," a variation on "Stack O'Lee," delivered with a smoldering vocal that intensifies the violent lyric. Breezy joins in on "We Deserve a Happy Ending," providing harmonies and hand claps to accent the song's stomping, funky energy, while Peyton's throbbing bass notes give "Shakey Shirley" a down-home dance pulse as it celebrates the joys of true love and root beer. Over four-million viewers have visited YouTube to watch Peyton play shotgun guitar—a three-string guitar/shotgun hybrid that fires live ammo between arpeggios—but the music here doesn't rely on gimmicks to make its impact. With minimal production adding a natural reverb to the tracks, Peyton's husky howl, stark playing and simple lyrics give the album a bracing, ageless power. *J. Poet*

Karen Elson

Double Roses H.O.T RECORDS LTD.

It's hard to listen to **Karen Elson**'s new solo album without trying to infer something from the lyrics. Elson's last record, 2010's *The Ghost Who Walks*, was produced by her then-husband Jack White and, since then, the two have had some fairly public discord. "Call Your Name," one of the standout tracks on *Double Roses*, is a breakup song, one that describes the lingering heartbreak of a relationship that's split apart. It could be about White, which is the first thing that occurs to the listener, and that sense is compounded by the fact that the track was co-produced by The Black Keys' **Patrick Carney**, who has his own beef with Elson's ex. Celebrity drama aside, though, it's a lovely song and it would likely ease the ache of anyone going through a breakup. It's one of Elson's best efforts on this album, which is whimsical and airy, especially on flute-laced opener "Wonder Blind." There is a real emotional heft behind the songs (although occasionally that weight is ignored in favor of precious, chirping instrumentals), and Elson explores what feels like years of feelings. There's a sincerity to her expression as she allows us to be privy to her inner thoughts and reflections. Folksy crooner "A Million Stars" is, again, about a past relationship ("Now I'm haunted by a memory/ And between us lays a raging sea") and acoustic closer "Distant Shore" is particularly soulful and evocative as Elson howls, "I am alone and I am free." *Emily Zemler*

El Michels Affair

Return to the 37th Chamber

BIG CROWN

There's some serious reverse-engineering happening on this ominous, funky and cinematic record. The tracks are essentially (mostly) instrumental re-creations of songs from the Wu-Tang Clan's catalog, as well as from some of the Wu members' solo projects. **El Michels Affair** mastermind **Leon Michels** worked on analog tape with impeccably recorded beats, guitar tones and keyboard flourishes. The group consists of members of The Dap-Kings, Antibalas and other New York instrumental/studio wizards. They were hired to back Wu-Tang, which launched them in this direction. This album, a follow-up to EMA's first fully Wu-centric project in 2009, opens with a cover of "4th Chamber," a sample-rich song from GZA's second solo record. "Snakes" is a cover of an Ol' Dirty Bastard track that was fueled by a speed-adjusted Joe Tex sample, and which has the source material moved to the foreground here, courtesy of soul singer **Lee Fields**, while still retaining a dub vibe. The whole album is a fascinating homage piece to the Wu-Tang Clan and to their deep library of samples and beat-making mastery. It happens to be completely captivating and retro-psychedelic, even if one is not familiar with the Wu record that it's riffing on. The album returns music based, in part, on mechanical reproduction to the realm of the handmade. Listen to the way that the sampled vocal scraps or accents from the turntable are turned into textural touches from the guitar or the organ. It's a back-and-forth that seems true to the genre, and it's done with such mastery that it becomes its own thing. *John Adamian*

Steve Hackett

The Night Siren INSIDEOUT

As an early member of Genesis, guitarist **Steve Hackett** was instrumental in crafting many of the band's best albums—*Nursery Cryme, Foxtrot* and *Selling England by the Pound* among them—long before Phil Collins' promotion to frontman eradicated their progressive posture and made them more like pop wannabes. It's little wonder then that Hackett has spent the latter part of his career retracing Genesis' signature songs live and on record, recreating former glories for the adoring masses. Notably then, *The Night Siren* finds him moving forward under his own aegis. There's all the sweep, drama and grandeur that one might expect from an artist of his ilk—as evidenced on songs such as "Behind the Smoke," "In the Skeleton Gallery," "Fifty Miles From the North Pole" and "El Niño"—but, to his credit, Hackett integrates other intriguing additives as well. Oversized arrangements, raging percussion, uilleann pipes, and all manner of South American and Middle Eastern instrumentation provide the exotic elements that enhance the album's cinematic sound. Those international additives impart a message about global unity and understanding—an intent that's especially obvious on "West to East" and "Anything but Love"—but, for the most part, the music sacrifices intimacy for intensity. Hackett's soaring fretwork takes center stage, with occasional harmonies, folk-like flourishes and a sound that recalls Mike Oldfield's symphonic stance enhancing the sense of spectacle. *The Night Siren* finds Hackett back making music through his own dynamic designs. *Lee Zimmerman*

British Sea Power

Let the Dancers Inherit the Party

GOLDEN CHARIOT/CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL

British Sea Power haven't unveiled a proper album since 2013, when they dropped *Machineries of Joy*. Between then and now, the U.K. group created several film soundtracks but largely stayed

under the radar. *Let the Dancers Inherit the Party*, the band's sixth full-length, offers 12 new songs that harken back to British Sea Power's heyday. On tracks like "Keep on Trying" and single "Bad Bohemian," the musicians channel the British post-punk revival style that brought them success on their 2003 debut. The songs are brash and boisterous, replete with indie-rock hooks, and are immediately engaging. But they also feel somewhat nostalgic at this point. That scene, which birthed the band's contemporaries Franz Ferdinand, Bloc Party and Kaiser Chiefs, doesn't necessarily reflect current musical sensibilities, and the music sounds a little dated here. British Sea Power have always been good at what they do, especially when it comes to crafting more melancholy numbers, like "Electrical Kittens," but how much have they changed or evolved since *The Decline of British Sea Power* came out nearly 15 years ago? There's certainly merit in doing something with skill and precision, and these songs are good. But 2017 British Sea Power could be 2007 British Sea Power. The strongest moment arrives last: The hushed intimacy of closing number "Alone Piano" is beautiful and striking, stripping away the propulsive rock instrumentals and vocal yelps for a dulcet, emotional melody. It's the sort of genuine instance that you want more of throughout the rest of the album, as solid as it all is.
Emily Zemler

Greg Graffin

Millport ANTI-

"It's a hard time living on the backroads of my mind," **Greg Graffin** croons on the opening track of his new solo album, *Millport*. It's a bluesy number with a Southern twang, and it sets the tone for the tracks to come, which embrace that countrified sensibility—what Graffin calls a "classic Laurel Canyon" sound. It's a more intimate side of Graffin, best known as the frontman of punk band Bad Religion, and it reveals what a good songwriter can do regardless of genre. Graffin's literary roots show themselves here, too, particularly on "Lincoln's Funeral Train," which recounts the events following the assassination of President Lincoln. Graffin is able to narrate the story and give compelling life to an otherwise dry historical tale, pairing it with folksy rock riffs. "Shotgun," another twanging number, again emphasizes the lyrics, ensuring that each line takes the listener on a journey. Graffin's solo albums have arrived very infrequently. His last, *Cold as the Clay*, dropped in 2006, nearly a decade after his first. On this one, like on his previous effort, Graffin worked with Bad Religion bandmate **Brett Gurewitz**, who produced these songs. It's even been four years since the last Bad Religion album, so *Millport* brings a sense of relief along with it. These are musicians we continually need to hear from, in whatever incarnation they come, and although *Millport* doesn't take a strong political stance, it's nice to have Graffin's voice in your ear during these times—or any times. ***Emily Zemler***

Romantica

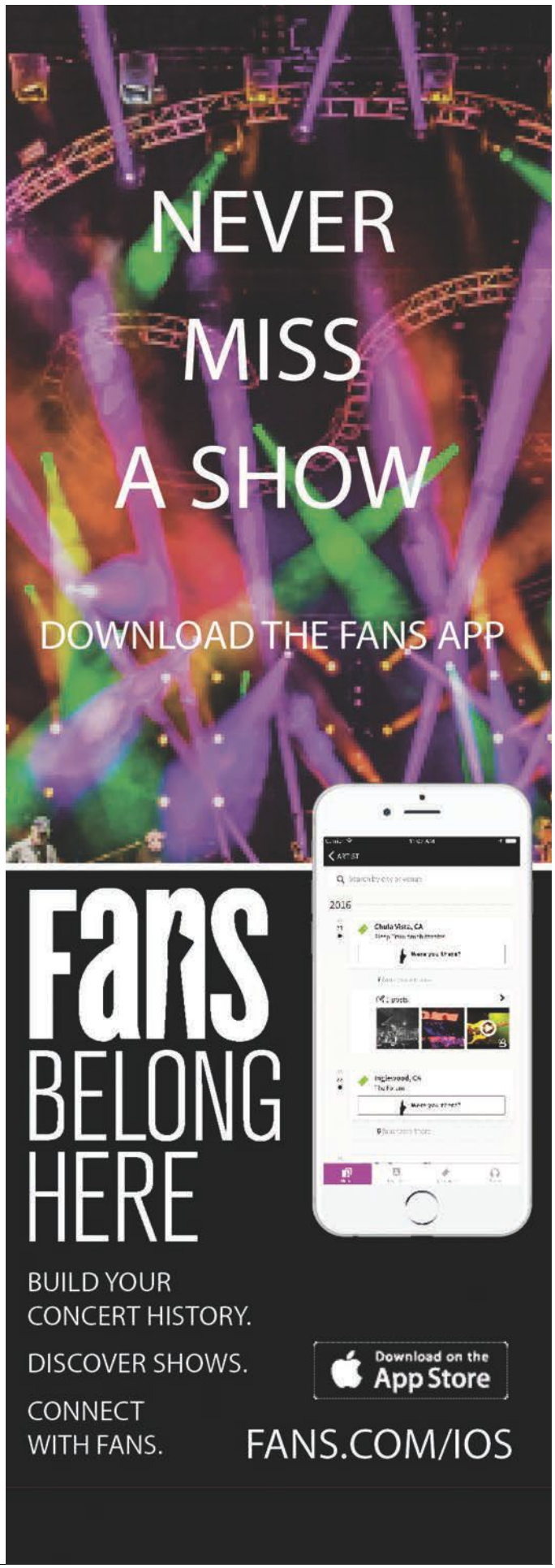
Shadowlands LAST CHANCE

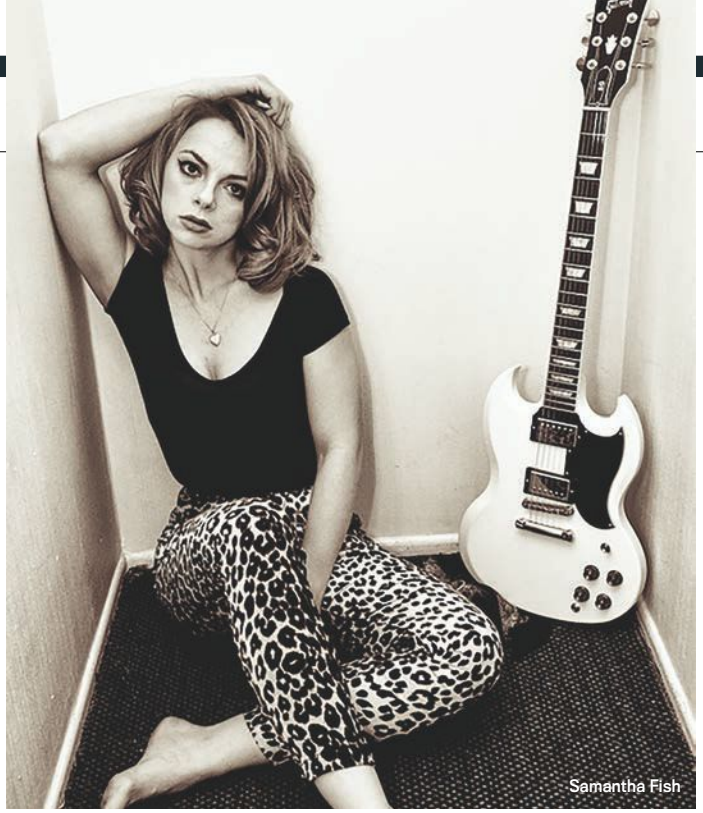
The relationship between **Ben Kyle** and **Romantica**, the band he helms, is often vague and interchangeable, especially when it comes from the heart. Staking out a sound that derives from an inner emotional core, songs such as "Let the Light Go Through You," "Harder to Hear" and "Buffalo Bill" surge with sentiment and desire. A continuation of the dream-laden mélange proffered over the course of three earlier albums and Kyle's eponymous solo debut, *Shadowlands* reflects its title—mostly hushed, contemplative and steeped in solitude. Indeed, the melodies teem with breathtaking beauty—dimly lit, but resolute regardless. It can seem contradictory at times; when Kyle croons, "Yes, I'm in love," on the plaintive "Get Back in Love," it's not quite as convincing as it maybe ought to be, not that Kyle and company are entirely mired in melancholia. Certain songs—"Cecil Ingram Conor," "St. Paul City Lights" and "Lonely Star" in particular—provide rootsier feels that temper the more dreamlike dirges. Likewise, when they stake out middle ground, as on the track "After the War," they find themselves delving into Band-like territory, bringing to mind the precious times when Richard Manuel would sing at the fore. Consequently, Romantica eludes easy categorization, and if an argument is made that they're Americana, then their shoe-gazing tones would likely contradict that notion. Leave it to "Shandy Bass," a snappy final sendoff. It's an obvious indication that shadows are finally clearing and there's light found on the far horizon. ***Lee Zimmerman***

Laetitia Sadier Source Ensemble

Finding Me Finding You DRAG CITY

There's no getting around it: Even as she's embarked on a successful solo career, the dulcet voice of **Laetitia Sadier** will forever be associated with her avant-pop group Stereolab. It's a voice too distinct and singular to be mistaken, no matter the context. Luckily,




Samantha Fish

Sadier—even when collaborating with artists like Odd Future rapper Tyler, the Creator and R&B/hip-hop producer Adrian Younge—has never been bothered by this fact. On her new album, *Finding Me Finding You*, she doesn't run from Stereolab comparisons. The result is her finest, most collaborative effort since the end of her former collective. The record's Tropicália flourishes, motorik minimalism, and lounge-ready sloganeering fit Sadier like a broken-in bomber jacket. She gels with her newly christened band, the **Laetitia Sadier Source Ensemble**, with an easy grace. Ever mining the gray area between the personal and political, Sadier crouches her ideological concerns in the language of relationships. "I don't want what the taker wants," she sings on "Deep Background," and on "Love Captive," a duet with **Alexis Taylor** of Hot Chip, the two harmonize, "Can I love you and stay free?" Much of the album posits that, yeah, that sort of thing could be worked out. "Psychology Active (Finding You)" makes desire a plain, understated goal ("To feel good above all else/ Is my preference"), and the Brazilian sway of opener "Undying Love for Humanity" effortlessly evokes the sentiment expressed by its title. In these tense times, Sadier's humanistic optimism sounds as enticing as it does radical.

Jason Woodbury

The Weeks

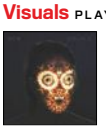
Easy LIGHTNING ROD

Wild and rambunctious, *Easy* finds **The Weeks** entering their second decade fully charged and flush with brash exuberance. Whereas earlier efforts found the band more subdued in its stance, the new album boasts a kinetic delivery that keeps it energized throughout. That's evident from the outset, and on tracks such as "Talk Like That," "Sevens," "Bottle Rocket" and "Start It Up," The Weeks plow ahead at full tilt, barely taking time to catch their collective breath. Having made their base in both Nashville and Mississippi, The Weeks transported their Southern sensibilities to Ardent Studios in Memphis, finding themselves midway between their homes, old and new. The archival feel, imbued by those historic environs is evident on tracks like "Hands on the Radio" and "Gold Doesn't Rust," where the sound of Southern grit gives the music a soulful quality that's not out of sync with more upbeat entries. This is an affirmative offering by any definition, complete with kick-ass choruses and resolute refrains that guarantee an immediate impression. It isn't a matter of insurgence; to the contrary, The Weeks convey the immediacy of everyday concerns with a desire to unfurl their frustrations in ways others can relate to. So while a song like "Blame" seeks a scapegoat for apparent misfortune, there isn't a focus on specific targets. "Blame me, blame anyone you want," singer **Cyle Barnes** suggests over the song's pulsating beat. Ultimately, The Weeks are an everyman ensemble railing about reality, with the riveting hooks needed to corral their concerns.

Lee Zimmerman

Mew

Visuals PLAY IT AGAIN SAM



Mew's new album, *Visuals*, was inspired by the energy of the Danish band's live shows. After touring on their last effort, +–, the musicians returned to Copenhagen and immediately created these 11 songs, which resound with the band's signature shimmer and charm. "The Wake of Your Life," a surging indie-pop number, is instantly compelling, drawing you in with its buoyant melody and euphoric synth notes. Darker, more cacophonous moments balance out the lighter, shinier ones. "Candy Pieces All Smeared Out," a bizarrely titled track that continues the band's history of strange song names, takes on deeper, grimier tones—an apt juxtaposition with its airy successor, "In a Better Place." The songs are terse by Mew's standards, with most clocking in at less than five minutes, but that doesn't mean that the musicians don't allow themselves to explore all possible avenues of sonic expression. They've never been a band that follows traditional structures, and they don't start here. There continues to be a magic to the way they unveil their tracks, especially on the penultimate "Zanzibar," a two-minute song that glitters and echoes before diffusing into the final song. That closer, "Carry Me to Safety," is shadowed and lovely, unfolding slowly and carefully. Singer **Jonas Bjerre** allows his lyrics to drawl out as the musicians layer sounds with plodding intent. The final impact of the tune leaves the listener with a very specific melancholy feeling as the album ceases with Bjerre's last words, "We're just coming home."

Emily Zemler

Mastodon

Emperor of Sand REPRISE

It's a classic chicken or the egg scenario: a metal band gets more popular and a bit less hardcore. Such is the case with Atlanta metal goliaths **Mastodon**, arguably the most revered heavy metal band of the 21st century. The band's early work was crushingly heavy, followed by a blistering prog-rock phase, and then easing into a melodic, pop-metal mold with 2011's *The Hunter*. With their seventh album, *Emperor of Sand*, Mastodon continues their very happy medium that began with 2014's *Once More 'Round the Sun*: machine-gun riffing and thunderous, punishing percussion with just enough melodic touches to land in both metal and hard rock playlists. Take the album's first cut, "Sultan's Curse." We get 40 seconds of explosive guitar thrashing before the fire burns into a spider-web groove, with guitarist **Brent Hinds** singing about "the smell of dirt and roses." The band has revealed that *Emperor of Sand* deals with themes of death and disease and, true to form, a sense of foreboding and dread hangs over this 11-song set, with some numbers veering further than ever from Mastodon's rapid-fire style into deep, dark, swamp metal. On "Steambreather," the band unleashes a rattling, grimy bassline that feels like it'll cause an earthquake. But the track also includes one of the album's most hummable choruses: "I wonder who I am... I wonder where I stand. I'm afraid of myself." *Emperor of Sand* isn't the band's most revolutionary record, but it's a welcome chapter as Mastodon continues its voyage as avant-metal's leading pioneers.

Justin Jacobs

The Mavericks

Brand New Day

MONO MUNDO/THIRTY TIGERS

Coming on the heels of the launch of their new label and a spectacular live album that effectively encapsulated their career, **The Mavericks**' *Brand New Day* lives up to its name—expanding the band's seminal sound and bringing in some diverse, if unexpected, elements as well. Lead singer **Raul Malo** is of Cuban-American descent, and given the various changes in membership that have transpired over the past 20 years, a shift in style isn't unexpected. The broad sweep of the title track is one indication, but even when the band references a familiar, trademark sound, as in the south of the border intonations of "Rolling Along," the influx of banjo brings a bluegrass feel that's somewhat out of sync with the broader motif. That's not to say they've changed entirely; the casual rhumba of "Easy as It Seems" and the romantic shuffle of "I Think of You" reflect a tendency to reference classic conceits. Likewise, it's not surprising to find Malo channeling his inner Orbison on tracks like "I Will Be Yours" and "I Wish You Well." Ultimately, *Brand New Day* showcases The Mavericks milking their retro romance for maximum effect, turning their Latin leanings into a concerted crowd-pleasing sound that distances them from the competition. And when they end the set with the bouncy sing-along of "For the Ages," it becomes clear they keep that intent intact.

Lee Zimmerman

Samantha Fish

Chills & Fever RUF

Samantha Fish is an exceptional guitarist and singer from Kansas City, Mo. She made her reputation playing the blues, impressing Buddy Guy enough to invite her to open shows for him at his Legends club in Chicago. Her playing has a rootsy edge and, in the last few years, she's moved toward more rock and retro sounds. She's a great songwriter but, on *Chills & Fever*, she lays her pen aside to deliver covers of classic rock and soul hits from the '60s and '70s. Fish cut the album in Detroit, using members of The Detroit Cobras, a retro-garage band known for their creative covers, as well as trumpet player **Mark Levron** and

forgotten hit, romps along on a swampy groove, with Fish delivering a jolting guitar solo to support a playfully haunting vocal. The growl of Blotsky's sax lays down a measured groove to open "Either Way I Lose." Fish sings the hopeless lyric with a trembling passion that makes a startling contrast to Nina Simone's more reserved approach. "Crow Jane" is another swampy romp with Fish matching her distorted slide-guitar work with a wailing vocal. Ted Taylor's "Somebody's Always Trying" hews close to the original at first, as Fish turns in a good-humored vocal. After the last chorus, Fish and pianist **Bob Mervak** take off on an extended instrumental duel–Fish bends notes and scratches on the strings while Mervak drops irregular clusters of rippling arpeggios into the mix.
J. Poet

Barika

When the Time Comes
SELF-RELEASED

Vermont's **Barika** plays a kind of mellow, groove-based West African fusion with traditional instruments, horns, tricky odd-time elements and dense polyrhythms. Barika's **Craig Myers** was a founding member of the similarly eclectic Rubblebucket, and he has spent almost a decade in Mike Gordon's solo group. On his own turf, Myers plays the kamele n'goni, a harp instrument from Mali and Guinea that is similar to a kora but lower, with fewer strings and a focus on more overtly rhythmic patterns. (The nomenclature can be a little confusing because what Myers plays isn't the same as the n'goni, which is an ancestor of the banjo, though both are part of the same tradition.) Barika builds off of the cyclical rhythmic patterns of West African music, layering lovely and ambitious horn parts with dreamy bits of atmospherics. The record includes numerous short percussion-based tracks that function like interludes focused on tradition. Barika does an impressive job of taking what is primarily dance music and retaining the groove and rhythmic density, while injecting a more mellow liquid texture and creating neo-soul songs like "Dreams," which has rippling kamele n'goni embellishments at its heart. The band also addresses issues like xenophobia, misogyny, homophobia and police brutality in "Find My Way." The syncopations on "Banni" suggest reggae but with a different feel. Listen to "Gotta Be Another Way" with its complex rhythmic patterns at work and the ways that the warm horn lines unfold over them. This is music that operates on a number of levels, with the idea of multiple rhythms pulsing at the same time serving as a metaphor for a kind of wider eclecticism and foundational diversity. *John Adamian*

BADBADNOTGOOD

IV INNOVATIVE LEISURE

These technically trained wise-ass jazzheads bonded over their mutual love of alternative hip-hop, alienating their instructors with a left-field Odd Future showcase. Six years later, after high-profile collaborations with Tyler, the Creator and Ghostface Killah, the band offers a crash course in jazz innovation on their head-spinning fourth LP. The permanent addition of saxophonist **Leland Whitty** elevates **BADBADNOTGOOD** into a more fluid live unit, conversing fluently in the vocabularies of post-bop and funk fusion. The blistering title track is a showcase for the newcomer's dexterous, arpeggiated squawking, anchored by **Matthew Tavares**' shimmering Rhodes and a dynamic rhythm section attack. But BBNG remain untethered to jazz tradition, mingling psychedelic keyboard tones ("And That, Too") and hip-hop grooves ("Lavender") that conjure MF Doom and mid-'70s Herbie Hancock in equal measure. Proof of their brilliance: Multi-reed experimentalist **Colin Stetson** makes as much sense blowing in 5/4 on the hypnotic "Confessions Pt II" as Future Islands frontman **Samuel T. Herring** does, adding crooning, heartbroken lines on pseudo-soul slow jam "Time Moves Slow." By the time "Cashmere" closes the set with glitzy orchestrations and Latin grooves, genre labels have disintegrated altogether. *Ryan Reed*

Ross Hammond

Follow Your Heart PRESCOTT

Ross Hammond & Sameer Gupta

Upward PRESCOTT/BIG WEEZUS

Ross Hammond is a wide-ranging California guitarist. His recordings have moved confidently from rubbery electric funk to gleaming Frippertronics and on into country blues. And his versatility doesn't interfere with the sensitivity that comes through in his playing in these varied settings though. On *Upward*, Hammond, playing 12-string acoustic guitar with a lot of slide, has paired up with tabla player **Sameer Gupta** for an album of largely improvised duos. The two have known each other and played together for decades. Fans of creative guitarists like Glenn Jones, Michael Hedges and John Fahey will appreciate Hammond's rich tone, his control and his willingness to fly in unexpected directions. The recordings of John McLaughlin's Shakti might come to mind, but Hammond and Gupta are doing something less tethered to tradition here. There's not a lot of harmonic movement, with most of the tracks hovering in a mode. Sometimes, Hammond picks away at a resonating arpeggiation while Gupta circles around the pulse and executes fluttering, crisp flourishes while snapping the rhythm into place with the liquid boom of the lower drum or toggling between a three- and four-beat pulsation. Melodic energies seem subservient to texture, rhythmic and coloristic concerns. But tracks like "Farm to Table" have a kind of jazzy post-bop chromatic density. *Follow Your Heart* is Hammond's latest, a solo record of mostly resonator guitar, with a few tracks featuring 12-string as well. Here, the guitarist plays open and spacious songs with pretty and meditative atmospheres, like Appalachian ragas. Hammond has a talent for relaxed pacing, never rushing or cluttering the music, which rings out and rises on its own. Recorded at a church in Sacramento, Calif., the mix of slide and drone, metallic tones, subtle harmonics, melodic flights and long sustains gives this record warmth and depth.
John Adamian

OFF THE TRACKS

Backup Planet

Reactions SELF-RELEASED

Following up their 2015 debut, *Element*, Nashville-based quartet **Backup Planet** experienced a tough year, working through a crash that destroyed their touring van and equipment, as well as the loss of a close friend and even a burglary. But the band used the trials to forge their sophomore album, *Reactions*, continuing their penchant for soaring, expansive music, blending rock, funk, jamtronica and more. On the album, Backup Planet voice some frustrations over the unpredictable nature of their chosen profession through songs like "Different Life," imagining what a more stable calling might provide. These four musicians clearly love what they do, however, delivering euphoric tunes like the album's title track, which rides a heavy and pulsing riff into a spacey and piercing guitar solo climax, and "Earth as a Dream," which presents one of the band's catchier choruses. "Destination Earth" blends a funk-fueled verse with an arena-rock refrain, exhibiting the band's ability and willingness to blend genres even in the same song. While a few of the more pop-influenced moments on the record, such as the soft acoustic intro to "Looking Up," can seem a bit out of place, it all comes as a result of Backup Planet's exploratory spirit. This also fuels them when they are at their best, like on the bouncy, Chili Peppers-esque funk of "Sublimation," boasting a peak that features some of the best guitar work and driving drums on the entire album. *Matt Inman*

Benjamin Francis Leftwich

After the Rain
BMG/VAGRANT/DIRTY HIT

Five years after he released his debut album, **Benjamin Francis Leftwich** begins *After the Rain* with some hushed words over a lullaby acoustic guitar: "Wonder what you're thinking, staring through the rain." The sound of the album is all but summed up right there–these are 13 beautifully whispered folk tunes held together by Leftwich's relatable, touching lyrics. Indeed, the songs aren't plagued by whimsy. (That opening line continues, "Your husband thinks you're sleeping... He doesn't know tonight you're flying out of hell.") Rather, they are brought to life with real emotion and storytelling. The British singer-songwriter's debut, *Last Smoke Before the Snowstorm*, was a sleeper hit in 2011, but he distanced himself from music after his father died. There's a haunted quality to many of these tunes, and Leftwich's writing is alternatingly mournful and hopeful. With a palpable uplift, he dives into the chorus of "Summer," singing, "It's been a long, hard year. I've been waiting for the summer to come." The record holds its vibe steady throughout, which leads to a lagging second half–it's strongest when Leftwich employs sonic flourishes, like the echoing percussion on "Some Other Arms." But as a sad-eyed, late-night listen, it'll do just fine.
Justin Jacobs

iji

Whatever Will Happen TEAM LOVE

Spawned from the DIY indie subcultures of Phoenix and the Pacific Northwest, **iji** is led by songwriter and singer **Zach Burba**, *and Whatever Will Happen*, the band's debut for Team Love, is the clear product of his 10 years of plugging away, touring art spaces and galleries, releasing small batch CD-Rs and cassettes. The term "twee" might serve as a catchall for the band's sound, but closer inspection reveals deep West Coast vibes, dense jazz chords, Tropicália and a homespun approach to AOR soft rock. Cheeky songs like "Cool Moves" and "Hard 2 Wait" are as smart as they are catchy, and Burba's lyrics about taquitos, listening to the stereo and sharing coffee find the sweet spot between earnest and ardent. Little touches, like the muted horns of "Cruisin' USA," the Petty-esque "Woo!" in "Bound 2 Glory" and squiggly, reverb-soaked guitars throughout, seal the deal.
Jason Woodbury

Drew Holcomb and the Neighbors

Souvenir MAGNOLIA MUSIC

After releasing last year's *Live at the Ryman*, which captured **Drew Holcomb and the Neighbors**' first appearance at the storied Nashville venue, the Music City–based outfit returns with their 10th studio album, *Souvenir*, proving that they have the talent, power and catalog deserving of such a setting. Lead single "Fight for Love," which Holcomb says was written the day after November's Presidential Election, is an electric country rocker that works both as a powerful love song and emphatic call to action. Immediately following that track, "Rowdy Heart, Broken Wing" showcases an entirely different facet of Holcomb and company, with a more subdued and open rumination that, nevertheless, carries the same strength as the bombastic single. Throughout the album, Holcomb's steady vocals cut deep on the softer ballads and soar on the arena choruses, and the band as a whole shows that it's still willing to throw some eclectic choice into the mix after over a decade of releases, like the electronic beat on "New Year" or the Jack Johnson–reminiscent lilt and pop of "Mama's Sunshine, Daddy's Rain." The harmonica-guitar interplay and nostalgic, catchy melodies of "Postcard Memories," an album highlight, display Holcomb's ability to craft a solid folk tune, while the more obviously traditional nod of "Yellow Rose of Santa Fe" completes Souvenir's eclectic picture, encapsulating the many faces of the modern country scene in Nashville. ***Matt Inman***

Barika

Plundering the Vaults

Soundgarden

Ultramega OK (Remixed Expanded Edition) SUB POP

It's quite amazing to think about just how long **Soundgarden** has been around, and just how much their brand of heavy rock has transitioned over the course of their 30-plus years since their formation. And it is certainly a long walk between their debut EP, *Screaming Life,* and the electro-MOR stuff that **Chris Cornell** has dropped lately. But for a short run in the days of Bush 41, there wasn't a purer dignitary of the distinct Pacific Northwest homebrew of Black Sabbath and Black Flag, back when the sound that would soon be marketed as "grunge" was still a regional thing. They even released their full-length debut, 1988's *Ultramega OK,* on Greg Ginn's SST Records, but immediately regretted that decision when they heard the muddy original mix. Soundgarden cast the album aside to get right to work on their first major-label effort, 1989's *Louder Than Love*. Yet, warts and all, *Ultramega* has remained a quintessential testament to the sheer brutality that existed within the original Soundgarden lineup. And while Ginn is notorious for the vice grip he has on the SST catalog, by some miracle, the band was able to wrest the masters for *OK* away from the guitarist and brought the tapes to their longtime Seattle pal **Jack Endino** to correct the murk in the mix for this long-overdue reissue. Not only has *Ultramega OK* never sounded crisper and more crushing, but it's also been supplemented with an EP's worth of early demo versions of key cuts such as "Incessant Mace" and "Beyond the Wheel" that place the ultimate exclamation point on this rehabbed classic. ***Ron Hart***

John Lee Hooker

Whiskey & Wimmen: John LeeHooker's Finest VEE-JAY

You don't exactly have to scour the world to find a decent compilation of **John Lee Hooker**'s key recordings. A scan of any online music retailer's stock will allow you to virtually customize your choice: Whether you'd prefer an exhaustive box set or something not quite so elaborate, Hooker's early sides or something from his later years, the choices are innumerable. This new single-disc collection aims to corral the most essential tracks cut by the blues giant over his long career—for the Vee-Jay, Specialty, Riverside and Stax labels—onto a single CD. It does a commendable job. Naturally, it's the primal early waxings that still best define Hooker's gift to the American music lexicon: "Boogie Chillun," "Boom Boom" and "Dimples" lead off the package because they arguably remain Hooker's most important and durable creations. This is the sound that hooked young blues aficionados on both sides of the Atlantic—the Stones and The Animals, Canned Heat, The Doors and Dylan, too. But what *Whiskey & Wimmen* offers that's more valuable, in its concentrated brevity, is an opportunity to focus on some of the tracks that don't get cited as often in overviews of Hooker's canon: the ornery "Big Legs, Tight Skirt," the lascivious "Grinder Man" and others. While a few of the later tracks suffer from production faux pas (backing vocalists are not welcome here), this 16-track collection serves as a tidy and estimable intro to an indispensable body of work. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

Phish

SPAC '95 LIVEPHISH

Saratoga Springs, N.Y.'s Saratoga Performing Arts Center has been one of **Phish**'s favorite stops over the years. And why is that? You can probably trace it back to June 26, 1995, the second time the band hunkered down as headliners at SPAC—a Monday night that kicked off the final week of that summer's tour. The 18-song show contains many strong versions of several tunes that would be considered rarities today: the bluesy cover of "Don't You Want to Go?," a number they pulled out only a few times that year and have since shelved, "My Mind's Got a Mind of Its Own," "Tela" and "Dog Faced Boy." Led Zeppelin-lined versions of "Possum" and "You Enjoy Myself" also rear their heads during this evening, making for fun, unexpected riffs. But you're coming to this show for the second-set opener, a monster combination of "Down With Disease" and "Free" that stretches for 40 minutes. At that point in the band's history, both songs were relatively new—"Disease" was a little over a year old, and "Free" just a few weeks old. It's the exploration during these two numbers that finds Phish delving into sonic darkness that felt like new territory for them at the time—and remains one of the best improvisational moments of 1995. Consider this a must-have for any Phan. ***Mike Ayers***

Grateful Dead

May 1977: Get Shown the Light RHINO

This second box of 1977 shows documents four gigs, including the famous 5/8/77 performance at Cornell University's Barton Hall. **Betty Cantor-Jackson** recorded these tapes and you can feel her sense of space. The band is at a peak but also in a time of transition. They're about to release the complexly composed *Terrapin Station*. They have *Blues for Allah* material that hasn't been in rotation for long. **Donna Godchaux's** co-lead vocals and **Keith Godchaux**'s piano and synthesizer are essential. **Mickey Hart** has fairly recently returned; he and **Bill Kreutzmann** seem to be getting their footing across the first three shows, seeking balance between the big bouncy and the subtler trap-kit shuffles that the cowboy songs and these new compositions require.

There are some fine moments in the New Haven and Boston shows—the wide-open oceanic spaces in "Peggy-O," **Jerry Garcia** making his guitar talk like Frampton's on "Estimated Prophet." Some of the tunes come off *too* bouncy, although "Tennessee Jed" works well on this frame. At Cornell, they have all of the energy they've been using to fill hockey rinks—but with only 5,000 people, they can get the subtleties across. They play a note-perfect show, like they are leaning back in their chairs and just when they're about to tip over backward, they find perfect balance—and hold it. It's album-quality improvisational rock-and-roll spun out live and bottled on the fly by Betty. It's a fucking miracle. Note Garcia's solo on "Deal" and his interplay with the drummers on a blues-holler "Not Fade Away" jam. They amp up the intensity in Buffalo, back in the big War Memorial. Check out that "Not Fade Away," too—its jam is a fusion of post-Ned Lagin avant-garde and old-time blues. It descends into a "Comes a Time" that is simply sublime. ***Richard B. Simon***

Rodrigo y Gabriela

Rodrigo y Gabriela ATO

In the end, shredding is shredding, and genre borders don't matter much. The spiritual kinship between rapid-fire flamenco guitar playing and the machine-gun riffage of thrash metal shouldn't have really been any big surprise, but when pyrotechnic

Brian Jenkins

acoustic-guitar duo **Rodrigo y Gabriela** emerged on the American music scene, light bulbs went off and devil horns went up. To celebrate the 10-year anniversary of Rodrigo y Gabriela's self-titled proper debut, the pair is giving that record, which featured ear-catching covers of Led Zeppelin and Metallica, a deluxe, remastered reissue—complete with a few bonus tracks and a previously unreleased 2006 live recording from Dublin's Olympia Theatre. Rod and Gab know how to build crazy tension and explosive release by toggling between speedy sixteenth notes and triplets, dialing down dynamics, striking the bodies of their guitars to get battering percussion sounds or contrasting glassy runs on the high strings with the thrumming grit of bar chords on the low strings. Gabriela does some serious heavy lifting in the rhythm department; her wrists do some superhuman things. One can even hear hints of reggae in places, like on the live version of "Tamacun," the single from the record. The pair makes muscular music that is still delicate. The duo got its start as Mexican musicians who moved to Ireland, playing in pubs there before building up a huge following. And so the cross-cultural mash-up element has been a part of Rod and Gab's thing from the start. If there's another element in common between metal and flamenco, then it might be a classical-leaning taste for exuberant chromaticism unleashed in virtuosic bursts. *John Adamian*

Rodrigo y Gabriela

Dan Hicks and the Hot Licks

Greatest Licks—I Feel Like Singin'

SURFDOG

The death of **Dan Hicks** at age 74 in early 2016 robbed us of one of the most distinctive singer-songwriters of his generation. Originally a drummer for the San Francisco-based band The Charlatans in the '60s, Hicks quickly broke away and formed the acoustic-based **Hot Licks** as a vehicle for his songs, which straddled a line between swing, country, folk, jazz and other genres. His tunes ranged from quirky/humorous/sardonic ("How Can I Miss You When You Won't Go Away?") to nakedly romantic ("I Scare Myself"), and although his audience was never huge, it was unfailingly devoted.

The dozen tracks on this single-disc collection all come from later in Hicks' recording career, the 2000s. The older tunes here, including the two aforementioned, as well as "Where's the Money?" and "I Feel Like Singin'," are remakes, some having appeared on the 2001 *Alive & Lickin'* album. To call these versions inferior to the originals would be doing them something of a disservice; while Hicks had issues during his life that rendered some of his performances less than stellar, his recordings were always solid and his supremely talented accompanists never failed him. While it's a bit off-putting to hear drums on the haunting "I Scare Myself," the version holds its own here.

But the compilation's main draw is the lesser known tracks, not the the rehashes. "That's Where I Am," a jaunty swing tune from 2004's *Selected Shorts* (which included contributions from **Willie Nelson**, **Jim Keltner** and others), is as embraceable as anything from the Hot Licks' early days, and "That Ain't Right," from the same album, is a virtual guide to virtuosic picking. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Lee Moses

Time and Place LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Lee Moses was an accomplished sideman in Atlanta, and yet his solo debut from 1971, a mix of growling Southern soul and slow funk, was somehow released and ignored at the time. This Light in the Attic reissue will rectify that. Moses, who died in 1997 at the age of 56, obviously thought he was about to hit the big time—the theme of which is the thrust of "Got That Will." And, having worked with a young Jimi Hendrix and Gladys Knight, Moses had reason to believe that he was headed to stardom. He had a voice that could lurk in warm and low regions, or leap up to falsetto heights or feverish howls. With a sense of poise and restrained pacing, he offers one of the most emotional and lucid readings of the oft-covered "Hey Joe." Infidelity and illicit affairs are themes on many of these tracks, with the remarkable "Free at Last" taking what sounds like a twist on a snippet of the famous MLK speech and turning it into an anthem of romantic liberty. Fans of Percy Sledge and Otis Redding will want to absorb Moses' smoldering, yet sensitive, soul. In addition to his energetic delivery, horns, lush backing vocals and warm vibraphone give *Time and Place* a depth—further cementing Atlanta's reputation as another epicenter of African-American popular music, separate and distinct from Detroit, Memphis and New York. *John Adamian*

Johnnie Frierson

Have You Been Good to Yourself

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Originally a cassette-only DIY release that found its way into the hands of an astute thrift-shopping record collector in Memphis, Tenn., this lo-fi recording is disarmingly heartfelt and raw, like a primitivist gospel transmission of stripped-down guitar, foot-stomping accompaniment and deeply expressive vocals. **Johnnie Frierson** came from a musical family, and his guitar playing ranges from skeletal to jazzy. But the sentiment and spirit of these songs is so powerful—a soulful expression of the Golden Rule with notes of Christian forgiveness, divine purpose and grace threaded throughout. And Frierson's singing covers a whole range of emotions, using howls, coos and exhortatory outbursts. The title track will bring tears to your eyes, if you're inclined that way, and its simple articulation of the truth—like the repeated line "When you mistreat yourself/ Then you mistreat your children"—has a lightning-bolt potency to it. Equally moving is the why-am-I-here meditation "You Were Sent to This World." Fans of the epic, obscure gospel anthology *This May Be My Last Time Singing* will want to get this one. There's a lot of pain, searching and faith that comes through on this recording. One needn't share Friedson's religious perspective to be moved by his expression of faith. *John Adamian*

CLASSIC PLEASURES, NEW RECORDINGS

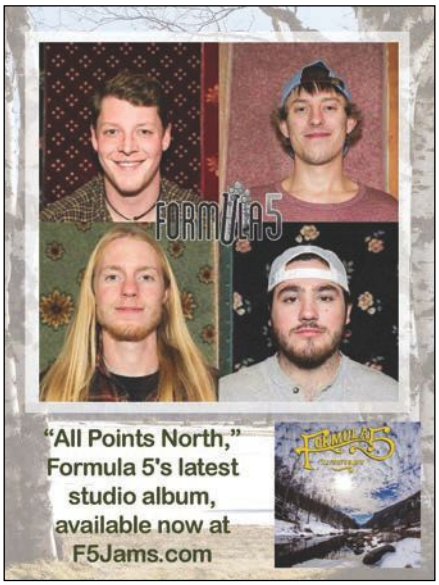
Peter Hook & The Light

Unknown Pleasures: Live in Leeds 2012
Closer: Live in Manchester 2011
Power, Corruption & Lies: Live in Dublin 2013
Movement: Live in Dublin 2013

LET THEM EAT VINYL/ WESTWORLD RECORDINGS

As the de facto keeper of the flame for all things Joy Division and New Order, founding bassist **Peter Hook** is arguably more qualified than anyone to perform this music live—and that includes the current lineup of New Order itself. Depending on who you ask, the years-long and colorful feud between Hook (now an ex-member of New Order) and founding frontman Bernard Sumner is just one big misunderstanding, but even a cursory read of Hook's brilliant tell-all book *Substance: Inside New Order* maps out a story that, even if the many documented instances of "Barney being a twat" aren't 100-percent true, nonetheless reveals Hook to have lived, and very nearly died for, his art, many times over.

That said, from a musical standpoint, Hook also invented a bass-playing style that's inseparable from the sound of both bands—Joy Division in particular. Lead singer Ian Curtis personified the darkness and tragedy of the classic Brit post-punk albums *Unknown Pleasures* and *Closer*, but without Hooky laying down his melodic basslines, often in the upper registers of the instrument, the music would be much less memorable. Since 2010, Hook has had the unit behind him (featuring his son **Jack Bates** also on bass, **David Potts** on guitar, **Andy Poole** on keyboards and **Paul Kehoe** on drums) to hammer this point home. "Leaders of Men," "Atrocity Exhibition" and "Love Will Tear Us Apart" sound more experimental and punk-rock than the originals, even with Hook singing in his less-than-stellar wail—a shortcoming that's mitigated again when he puts his all into New Order nuggets like "Everything's Gone Green," "Blue Monday" and "Dreams Never End," on this Dublin set from 2013. The Light is a pretty fantastic band onstage too, which begs the question: Can we expect a studio album of new material on the horizon? In Hooky we trust. *Bill Murphy*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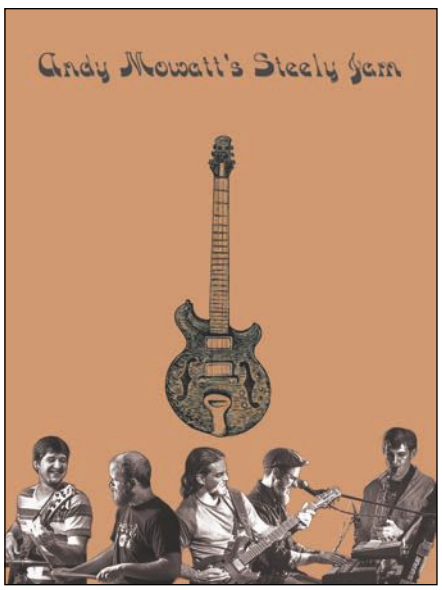
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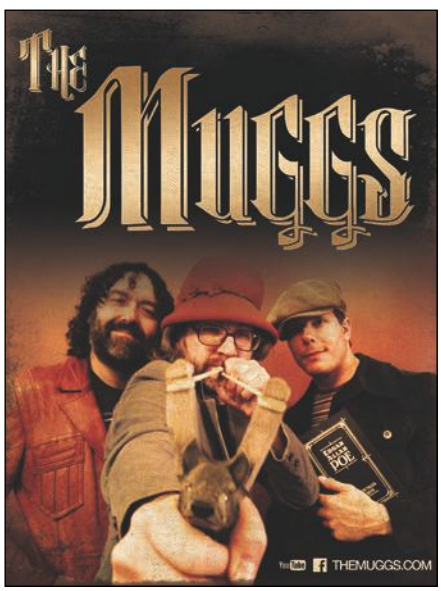
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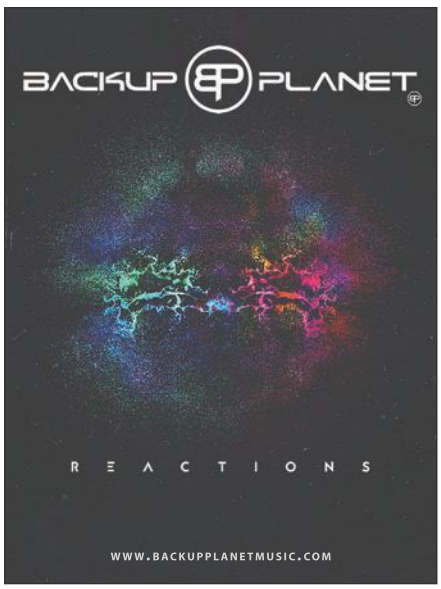

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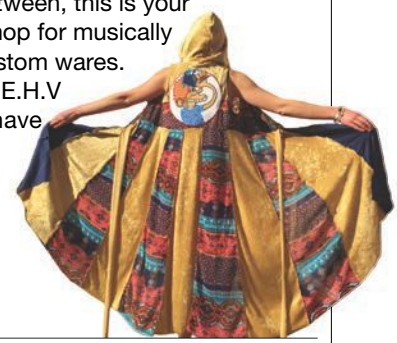

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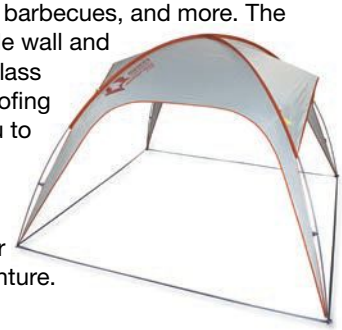

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Dina Millan (EVP, People & Culture), Mayers, Farman and Melissa Wallace (VP, Marketing) at Bonnaroo in 2016.

markets [where] there was now even more competition because it was concentrated under this umbrella. It was an opportunity for us and Capps to figure out our footing within this changing industry. That's why it was appealing.

Capshaw is a serial entrepreneur who has always been on the innovative front, whether it's Musictoday or the way that he manages bands, and he's a calculated risk-taker. He has always been on the front end of taking smart chances—obviously with his work with Dave Matthews Band—and, being a fan of the Grateful Dead, he understood the strength of this community and a new way of thinking about the business model. It was also a platform for him with some of his other businesses, like Musictoday, to have a case study for his fan-club ticketing. It deviated into some of the other business lines that he was in.

What was an early lesson that you learned?

You have to be open to change. You could write a business plan, and it could be well thought out and planned, but the nature of our business is the twists and turns, and you have to go in expecting that and you have to be flexible in your thinking—and also be decisive and have a point of view. We were fortunate, but one of the challenges at the beginning of Bonnaroo was that everyone wanted to play. It was hard saying no. There's the realization that if this is something that's true to what we want to present, then you're going to *have* to say no. You're not going to please everyone, but that's being true to what it is you're trying to present and [having] your own point of view.

What are your worst or most stressful days like?

The harder days, which are inevitable, are the days that things get stuck, or make one step forward and two steps back, because of circumstance. It's important, as I get older, to realize that they've all blended together. You have to stay diligent about things, stay on them and be aggressively patient. You have to push forward, but you've got to be patient. That's why I have to have multiple things going—they all have a different trajectory, but that helps when I wrestle with that patience of not seeing things move as quickly as I would like to.

And that's the aggressively patient concept—being aggressive about stuff but knowing when to hang tight.

That's right. That took some time and I'm still challenged by it. There are things that are beyond your control, and there are things that are going to have their timeline because you're working with different partners, colleagues, talent. Knowing where I can push [and] when to let go are the kind of gray in-betweens that come from learning through experience.

There's a challenge in going from having an idea and communicating it to getting people to come on board, forming partnerships, creating a business model, bringing it into the world and having it be well received. There are so many different elements. Again, I go back to why I do it, and it can be very challenging. Sometimes I feel like the more I do it, the less I know. The biggest challenge is just being open to changes in plans or expectations, and being able to pivot a strategy. You've got to be passionate, focused and have a vision, *but* you've got to be open to it evolving.

Did you have a specific experience where something didn't go the way you'd hoped and led you guys to make a big change?

There's a ton that I've learned along the way, and I'm still learning to be able to just let go. If you want to build a team, have good partners and want everyone to feel invested, then there has to be some elements of compromise. There has to be an understanding of when to let go, when not to micromanage, in order to get the best out of your team or partners. That's an easy thing to fall on, especially in your early years when your chain of command isn't totally fleshed out—you're making it up as you are going along. But as you do it more, you create lanes for people to take ownership. That's how you get the best out of teams or partnerships.

Superfly Archive

DEAF EARS WITH TRENT REZNOR & ATTICUS ROSS

I've worked with Trent before. I did a remix of one of his records, so I knew that he's really easy to work with and he likes to collaborate, but I didn't expect the response that I got. A couple days after I spoke to him, he sent me an album's worth of stuff to choose from because he's been doing a lot of soundtrack work lately with his partner, Atticus Ross, and they have a library of stuff that they draw from when someone asks for music for a film or something. So, essentially, he sent me a big batch of those and all I had to do was pick one. I picked two because I was torn; I couldn't whittle it down. Eventually, the one that stuck was "Deaf Ears."

NAKED & AFRAID FEATURING BETTYE LAVETTE

Bettye LaVette's stock and trade is taking classic songs, songs that you know have been done to death and everyone is familiar with them, and really personalizing them. She's not a bombastic singer. For the most part, she sings very intimately, so for her to blast it out on a song like this is unusual. I was surprised that she was willing to do it, but I was also pleasantly surprised at the end because it was sort of what I imagined. I was imagining Tina Turner around the *Thunderdome* phase. She got there. I wanted it to be scary, and it was scary.

I've known Bettye for a long time. We've done shows together, and there was a point at which I was perhaps going to produce a record for her. I always knew, at a certain point, that if we worked together, I was going to be dragging her out of her comfort zone. We're good enough friends that she was willing to give it a try and, in the end, I think we were all pretty happy with the result.

BUY MY T

This song is actually almost specifically about the guy that does my merch, and his son, who is an internet music phenomenon. They don't sell their music ever; they do YouTube videos and then they sell concert tickets and merchandise. They don't have a record deal and there's no way you can buy a song of theirs. You can only see them on YouTube and you can only go to their shows and buy the merchandise.

This, to me, is the new music model. There's no record company involved at all, and everything that you sell pretty much is merchandise, as opposed to CDs. They don't even sell CDs at their shows—they never put their music on CDs. They're in the T-shirt business more than they're in the music business.

I think when Radiohead put out a new record and said, "Pay whatever you want for it," they realized that, in the long run, you make so much more money if you sell out a concert than if you sell a lot of records because, with records, you get the short end of it. You get 10-20 percent of the cost of the record. With concerts, you get the long end—you get 80 percent of it, and a concert ticket costs twice as much as the record. So records are and always have been advertising for your live shows.

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO KNOW FEATURING REBOP RUNDGREN

I was getting near the end of it and I wanted to get my son involved because he does something that I can't do—he plays this fingerpicking style of guitar, which I never learned how to do. So I asked him to play some stuff for me, and he gave me a couple of themes that became the inspiration for this song. Since it was a sort of fingerpicking thing, I wanted it to be more pastoral than a lot of the other material—not so harsh, a little bit easier to handle.

THIS IS NOT A DRILL FEATURING JOE SATRIANI WITH PRAIRIE PRINCE, KASIM SULTON

Joe Satriani is a really easy guy to work with—very positive. He sent me a track that had all of the components I needed, but when I heard it, I heard it in a different order, so I changed a few things around. I added strings and orchestral elements because I wanted it to be really big sounding and, from then on, it just kind of wrote itself. Again, to some degree, it's inspired by current events, metaphorically. It's not about a literal invasion of Attila and the Huns. It's more of an invasion of the stupid people in our country.

When I got it from Joe, he had some reference drums on it, which were pre-recorded drums out of the drum library. I realized I would have to replace that, so I asked Prairie [who is a member of Rundgren's touring band, as is Kasim Sulton]. Kasim always wants to be on the record, and I had already promised him, so this seemed the obvious place to get him on. Kasim did his in his studio and Prairie did his in another studio, so the remote collaboration was still in full effect.

Lynn Goldsmith

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1 Jeff Austin Band

"Rag Doll"
From the album *Do Not Let The Body Grow Cold*
Self-released

Jeff Austin continues to seek the dark and dangerous side of the acoustic world. With the Jeff Austin Band, he is joined by a group of like-minded adventurers in their quest for beauty through melody, structure and the chaos of freeform improvisation. Join them on "Rag Doll" …a meeting of the best of both of those worlds.

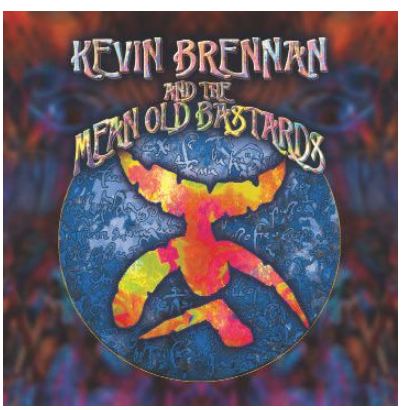
www.jeffaustin.com

2 Kevin Brennan And The Mean Old Bastards

"Mean Old Bastard"
From the album *Kevin Brennan And The Mean Old Bastards*
Long Hill Records

Kevin Brennan and the Mean Old Bastards are "Bringing The Big!" Kevin's songwriting prowess has been recognized by The Songwriters Hall of Fame and the Songwriters Guild of America. No less an authority than Roger Daltrey of The Who said after performing with Kevin: "Meet the new boss."

www.kevinbrennan.com



3 Mallory Lennon and the Sykadelix

"Honeyspine"
From the album *Born in a Bad Way*
Self-released

Hailing from Chicago, Mallory Lennon and the Sykadelix is an intricate fusion of soulful vocal prowess, sophisticated instrumentation and poignant lyrical stylings that breed their trademark craftsmanship. Their self-released debut, Born in a Bad Way, is set to release in June of 2017.

www.mallorylennonandthesykadelix.com

4 Useful Jenkins

"Waiting to Die"
From the album *Festival Express*
Self-released

Useful Jenkins is a contemporary acoustic band with a bluegrass influence. Their songs have clear, strong messages that captivate the hearts of listeners. After over a decade, Useful Jenkins has generated three full-length albums and plans to release their fourth by the spring of 2018.

www.usefuljenkins.com

5 Kendall Street Company

"Sweet and Clean"
From the album *Earth Turns*
Kendall Street Publishing

Kendall Street Company is a six-piece rock band from Charlottesville, Va. Known for their immensely energetic and unpredictable live performances, the band's musical style incorporates elements of jam, folk, jazz, ska, funk and psychedelic rock. Their sophomore effort, Space for Days, is set to be released in September 2017.

www.kendallstreetcompany.com

6 The Blue Project

"Run, Mindy Run"
From the album *Run, Mindy Run*
Greyboy Records

Danny Petroni is a guitarist/songwriter and leader of a highly creative and energetic hybrid rock-blues-jazz-roots ensemble titled "The Blue Project." Their new record "Run Mindy Run," featuring three-time Grammy winning trombonist Ku-umba Frank Lacy is set for release July 2017.

www.dannypetroni.com

7 Jimmy Lumpkin and The Revival

"Down to the Fields"
From the album *HOME*
Skate Mountain Records

On his debut album *Home*, "Southern-soul prodigy" Jimmy Lumpkin belts out sublime sounds that are altogether rock, country, soul and blues. From Skate Mountain Records, the album is garnering attention as Jimmy Lumpkin and the Revival deliver a "fresh brand of rock and soul that rivals the best of the genre, with an authenticity that only a little bit of backwoods upbringing can offer." After playing the Hangout Music Festival, Jimmy Lumpkin heads out with Sean Rowe for a tour from Chicago to Austin.

www.jimmylumpkin.com

8 Underhill Family Orchestra

"Showdown at St. Lawrence"
Single
Skate Mountain Records

The Underhill Family Orchestra are the "Americana cool kids with a cult following." A harmonious group of crazies from the Alabama Delta, The Underhills are known for their face-paint wearing, foot-stomping, aggressively catchy take on Southern pop and their spirited live performances.

www.weareunderhill.com

9 Karl Dietel Five

"River of Sin"
From the album *Karl Dietel Five*
Dietelicious Music

The music of Karl Dietel Five is a diverse platter reflecting the years of touring experience of their individual players. Keyboard frontman Dietel (The Samples) sings his band through Americana, jam, rock and Latin grooves that intrigue and uplift, served with heaping portions of melodic sensibilities and New Jersey roots.

www.karldietelfive.com

10 Balkun Brothers

"Don't Be Afraid"
From the album *Devil on TV*
Dixie Frog Records

Hartford, Conn.-based power duo, Balkun Brothers, conjure a powerful psychedelic rock 'n' roll sound that matches their explosive, high-energy live shows. Blood brothers Steve Balkun (guitar) and Nick Balkun (drums), bring a heavy mixture of rock, blues, funk and intense improvisation that's been impressing audiences across the U.S., Europe and beyond.

www.balkunbrothers.com

Sometimes the whole band seems new just because we haven't played together in five months. We might knock out the Halloween show, get through New Year's really fast, and then not play again until April or May. We might get sick of the road, catering or each other, but, on stage, once that first note is played, it's always new. That's why, after 30 years, I would imagine we're still doing it.

The only thing to say about Duane is he just stepped up, and he loves to play. He's gonna find a groove, listen to everyone and play off of everyone. He's gonna laugh through any weirdness that comes up because he and I both know—as everyone does that plays this kind of music—that there's great things in the weirdness.

THAT TRUCKS BLOOD

I remember Duane came to a show that we did at the Macon Coliseum in Georgia, when he was young. I'm sure I'd met him before, but it was the first time I remember talking to him. He just started floating around: He moved to Atlanta, and then he was playing with Jimmy's son, Carter, and dating his future wife, Cameron, Jimmy's daughter. It's all such a family thing. I can remember when we were cutting the Hard Working Americans' first record, we encountered a song called "Down to the Well," and we were trying to put a Motown spin on it. He hit a wall where he was overplaying the transition from a verse to the chorus. It sounded good, but it didn't work for the song. He started to get frustrated, and then both Neal Casal and I saw the light-bulb moment happen in his head. He's just like, "Wait! I don't really need to do *anything*!" It's like, "Yes!" He's such an innate musician; it's something in that Trucks blood. There's a gift, and they all work really hard to hone their gift, no exception. I've got a wealth of respect for him.

RIPE SONGWRITING CLIMATES

I just approved the vinyl master and the digital master for the Hard Working Americans' live record that we recorded last August in about four cities. Then we're convening in Nashville to begin work on a new record. [HWA frontman Todd Snider] says the climate is ripe for songwriting. He's got 10 songs; we're gonna go knock them out. It's so personal with Todd—it's a gift. As far as craftsmanship of songwriting, I don't think there's anyone who's more serious about it than he is.

He can write in any kind of format he wants; he got a co-write with Loretta Lynn on her last record. He gets certain songs and he's like, "This would be good for Hard Working Americans," and it could change at any moment. *Rest in Chaos* went back and forth from being a folk record, and a biographical record, to being a concept record for Hard Working Americans, to being a slacker version of the Moses story. He edits in such a brutal way. I have tons of respect for songwriters, but I have even more respect for Todd. The more I get to know him, the deeper it goes.

STEAL YOUR BASS

[*Relix* publisher and Lockn' Festival co-founder Peter] Shapiro called up and said, "Do you, Phil Lesh and Mike Gordon want to do some shop talk at Lockn'?" [*Laughs*.] Phil had grand ideas for transposing a Stravinsky piano piece into three basslines. I had a night off and stayed in Charlottesville, Va., and actually watched the Phish webcast just to try and get a read on how things felt. At about 2:30 a.m., after that webcast was over, I got this email addressed to me and Mike Gordon that's five pages of sheet music. Phil finally came through! He had been talking about doing it for six months, and then we wound up not doing it because Phil was so frazzled from arriving late to the festival [due to travel issues]! And we couldn't rehearse because My Morning Jacket was slaying it on the main stage.

So Phil comes over to me and Mike—we had spent the whole afternoon learning our parts, I might add—in the dressing room, and he's like, "I think we should just do a Stravinsky-esque bass trio." So that's what we did. We had a really good time. The best part of that, for me, was we did our little bass jam, and then we did a version of "He's Gone" with Hard Working Americans, which was terrific. Mike Gordon sang it, Susan Tedeschi was up there singing background, and it went to a cool jam. And then we didn't know what to do! We didn't talk about how to *disengage* from the three-bass thing.

All of a sudden, Snider turns around to me and goes, "Just follow me," and he starts screaming a Doors tune into the mic, just slamming into it. Phil didn't know what was going on at first. He's like, "This crazy guy with a flower in his hat is screaming into the microphone!" And then the band followed, and then this smile just crept across his face.

It made me feel warm and tingly inside because Phil's heard it all, and he's one of the more academic people in the improvisational business. He really gets it but is also a harmonically advanced being. He got the Snider vibe and the energy, and it's something that he probably doesn't feel too often. It's something that anyone who was at shows in the '60s and early '70s got a lot of—with people like Janis, Jim Morrison and Jimi Hendrix—this sort of *guttural* vibe of a personality. No one's trying too hard, people are just being themselves. I saw that smile creep across his face like a Cheshire cat, and it made it all worthwhile.

TRAINING YOUR AUDIENCE

I put together a Spotify playlist of bands I saw when I worked at the Uptown Lounge [in Athens, Ga.], and, in hindsight, you see what a profound influence those bands had on the '90s. But, when I saw those bands, it was the '80s—it was just college rock. The Uptown held 450 people when it was packed, and the Chili Peppers, Sonic Youth, Black Flag and Meat Puppets would come through every year. The Pixies opened for Yo La Tengo. Now, it feels like a staggering monolith of influential bands because I was just working the door at a nightclub in a music-oriented college town. I wasn't there when Nirvana played the 40 Watt. There were about 200 people there, though, but I guarantee you there are *8,000* Athenians that claim to have been there. [*Laughs*.] We didn't realize we were standing in the middle of a scene.

What Phil has going on at Terrapin is a great example of fostering a scene because he's an elder statesman, and he's got all of the people who float around in the coterie: the Nicki Bluhms, the Neal Casals, the Chris Robinsons, the Scott Laws. The list is huge, and what he's done is he's trained his audience—the fans that love Phil and what he does know that there's a certain watermark on whatever is presented. And a lot of stuff moves to the Grate Room that started in the bar. I took part in one of Ross James and Scott Law's Cosmic Twangs the other night, and we were just playing songs out of the Great Americana Songbook.

I'm also paying attention the Austin psych scene—Black Angels, Bright Light Social Hour—that Panic's around-the-house soundman Brett Orrison and Duane Trucks are big fans of. I really dig their willingness to experiment and where their influences come from. And I'm digging this blue-eyed soul scene that comes from the Daptone experience—bands like Lawrence. I just did some work with Andy Frasco & The U.N., and it's feel-good music. While Hard Working Americans does do songs for the working man and songs of protest, sometimes, I want to have fun and dance and forget about my problems.

NEW PANIC TRACKS

It's simmering. We're always working on new things. JB sent a few song ideas around. I know JoJo [Hermann]'s got something in his pocket. That's how it starts. [In terms of our new touring module] it's: "Let's try it out this year," but I think it's working out. The future is always uncertain. I would suspect that we'll probably stick with this for another year or two, but I've been proven wrong by myself plenty of times in the past. I'd be the first to eat crow—let me put it that way.

STEVEN VAN ZANDT

BY DEAN BUDNICK

STEVEN VAN ZANDT is a Renaissance man. This term is particularly appropriate because, as he states, "I don't have much interest in the modern world, and I don't pretend to." Nonetheless, he remains an active contributor to contemporary American culture as the host of SiriusXM's "Little Steven's Underground Garage," the co-writer and star of the *Lilyhammer* television series (following his extended run in *The Sopranos*) and his longtime post in the E Street Band, as well as his work with other artists (most recently The Rascals' Eddie Brigati). He also just completed the new studio album *Soulfire* and will return to the road with his own 15-piece band, Little Steven & The Disciples of Soul, following the record's release.

In describing *Soulfire*, you've said that you are now your own genre.

It's important to find your own identity, and what I did was I created this thing between rock music and soul music. It was an interesting combination, and we did it with Southside Johnny & The Asbury Jukes, and I did it on my first album. Then, I got more focused on what I was doing, in terms of my political research and awareness. So the records continued to be conceptual and thematic but, musically, they varied according to what I was into at the time. They became artistic adventures, separate from each other while complementing the overall path. Now, this was very satisfying artistically but, career-wise, it was a disaster, and it was not something I'd ever allow anyone else to do if they were my friend. [*Laughs*.] You can't have five different albums in five different musical genres. It's not smart!

So, basically, I said, "I'm gonna make a new album. Who do I want to be? Who am I here?" I'm a lot of different people, and I decided to go back to what I feel is my single

most identifying genre, which was rock meets soul—rock guitar with horns. And that was the way I decided to go and reintroduce myself to *me,* as well as whoever else was interested. [*Laughs*.]

You're opening your tour in Europe. To what extent do European audiences respond differently to your music than American audiences?

We're luckier than most—this includes my solo thing as well as working with Bruce and the E Street Band—in that our audience in America or Europe or Australia or anywhere else seems to be particular in their expectations and their dedication to what we do. It doesn't seem like a casual relationship. Maybe it's because we're not casual guys. [*Laughs*.]

But, there are cultural differences. First of all, Americans tend to come to observe, and Europeans come to the show expecting to participate. That's a very big difference in terms of how it looks, in terms of the basic optics. Now, it doesn't mean one audience member is less into it than another; it doesn't have anything to do with their passion or their love for the band or the music. It's a cultural difference. Europeans are just into participating. So, you have 50,000-70,000 people in an audience in Europe, singing every single word, not only of the old stuff, but the new stuff as well.

There's also a more integrated political awareness. The rock journalists in Europe are as politically conscious and politically aware as the political journalists in America. It's in their DNA. It's in their everyday lives because of their proximity to the other countries, the basic geographic circumstances, plus the history of the World Wars being fought there. Politics is very much a part of everyday life over there and, in America, it's just not—although that may be changing now, a little bit. [*Laughs*.]

Your song "I Am a Patriot" continues to resonate, perhaps now more than ever.

That's one of the most difficult songs I've ever written, first of all. So it's particularly rewarding to me that people have accepted it and embraced it. I stared at that title for a good year before I was able to write it. I knew I had to say it because I was being very critical of the United States and our foreign and domestic policies, but I was being very critical of the country from a point of view of a patriot—as opposed to just doing it to get attention, or doing it just to be a contrarian or whatever. I wanted to make sure I was making it very clear that my criticism was coming from a patriotic point of view, and the country is bigger than individual political parties. For 30-40 years now, I've been talking about how they're football teams, and all that matters to them is that their football team wins. But no matter which football team wins, the American people lose.

Beyond "Little Steven's Underground Garage," you also created the Outlaw Country format on SiriusXM. How did that come about?

I don't have much interest in the modern world, and I don't pretend to. I live in my own world. Many years ago, I was asked by a mutual friend associated with Billy Ray Cyrus if I could help him out and maybe write something with him, or for him. So I tuned in to country radio for a minute, and I started asking my country friends: "Whatever happened to Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, Hank Williams? What about *those* guys?" And they said, "They're completely out of fashion now." So I thought, "Maybe it's time for a new format."

So, as I researched it further, I decided it would be all three generations of Hank Williams—all the traditional guys and all of the alt-country people coming from the rock world that have no place to go. So, when Sirius Satellite came along, a friend of mine became an advisor there and asked me for some suggestions. That's what led to it becoming a format.

You also directed and produced "Eddie Brigati: After The Rascals," which debuted in April. What led to that?

I was called in to reunite The Rascals in the early '80s, and that eventually led to me writing and producing the Broadway show *Once Upon a Dream* [after it premiered at Port Chester, N.Y.'s Capitol Theatre], and then it ran around the country. About 100,000 people saw it, but three out of four of The Rascals started to become flaky, while Eddie Brigati—the guy they had blamed for breaking up The Rascals and was supposed to be the problem guy—turned out the exact opposite.

So when that ended so unceremoniously—and tragically, because it was the best work I had ever done—I said, "I want to do something with Eddie and have him be able to work without the other Rascals." It's more of a cabaret act; we're bringing Broadway songs into it, and he does different interpretations of Rascals songs. Eventually, I'd like it to go to Vegas and, hopefully, everywhere else. I've got a lot of problems, but thinking small isn't one of them.

Jo Lopez

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